

**INTRODUCTION AND SPREAD OF THE EXOTIC INVASIVE SPECIES
OXALIS PES-CAPRAE L. IN ITALY AND THE MEDITERRANEAN AREA OF EUROPE.
AN ATTEMPT AT HISTORICAL RECONSTRUCTION.**

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Oxalis pes-caprae L., a perennial, herbaceous and bulbiferous species from the Cape Region of South Africa, was introduced in Europe about the second half of the 18th century and is now common (and often invasive) in different warm-climate areas around the world. We have tried to reconstruct the times and places of the introduction of this plant and the ways of its diffusion in Italy and Euro-Mediterranean area through the gathering and analysis of historical data about its presence as a cultivated or wild species. The sources of data were the following:

1. Bibliographic (sometimes web-based) resources:
 - national and regional floras;
 - lists (printed or handwritten) of species grown in botanical and private gardens;
 - gardening books, commercial plant catalogues;
 - works about vegetation or geobotany;
 - scientific papers about this species and its systematics, diffusion, agricultural impact etc., including any kind of distributional data;
2. Specimens of *O. pes-caprae* from the most important European and Italian herbaria.

The collected data were organized into a database and then processed, obtaining a map of the presence of this species in Euro-Mediterranean area throughout the decades and an animated graphic showing the times and places of introduction and suggesting possible paths of distribution.

The evidence gathered shows clearly that the hypothesis of a single introduction of this species in Malta (reported also by Pignatti, 1982) can now be disproved with sufficient certainty. *O. pes-caprae* was repeatedly introduced in different times and places in the area considered in our study. Botanical and collectors' gardens probably played a significant (both voluntary and involuntary) role in the arrival and spread of this plant.

As an example, we discuss in detail some instances of Italian sites.

Pignatti S., 1982. Flora d'Italia, vol. 2: 3. Edagricole, Bologna.

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