

VareseNews

Does autumn charm you? It is because of its pigments

Pubblicato: Mercoledì 15 Dicembre 2021



Yellow specks that tend to gold or to those warmer shades of orange alternate with the cold shades of red that tend to **purple and even black**. Autumn provides unparalleled atmospheres for those who love characteristic landscapes and what the social media have called “**#autumnvibes**”. Of course, we should thank nature for this “foliage”, or rather, those pigments that are contained, in varying degrees, that give leaves the infinite shades typical of this season.

Colours of autumn, at the Cloister of Voltorre

“During spring and summer, the predominant pigment is **chlorophyll**, which gives leaves the typical green colouring we all know,” the botanist **Giacomo Bassetti** explains. Chlorophyll enables plants to carry out **photosynthesis** and to turn carbon dioxide into sugars. In **summer, leaves gather light**, and in autumn, the amount of chlorophyll decreases and other pigments prevail (*including carotenoids and anthocyanins, ed.*) that give leaves the shades typical of this season.”

Carotenoids are “responsible” for the warmer shades (yellow, gold and orange), whereas anthocyanins produce the reddish shades.



Autumn has its charm, whether you look towards the woods or towards the gardens. “In my opinion, it’s impossible to identify plants that are more beautiful than others,” adds Bassetti. “Sure, if we think for example of the Ossola valleys ([click here for photos of the Devero, in these days](#)) and of the mountain areas, we can’t leave out **the larch, with its typical, golden colour**. Of the trees common to Varese Province, we can mention **the birch, the maple, the elm and the lime**. In autumn, the beauty of nature can be seen also in gardens, where there’s not only the vegetation typical of the place. For example, one plant I love very much in autumn is the **gingko**, whose leaves are tinged with a particular shade of yellow. Then, there are also some conifers that aren’t evergreens; one such example can be found on **the lakefront in Angera (the taxodium distichum, or bald swamp cypress)**, right behind the playground area.”

Autumn excursions range from the woods in the Provinces of Varese and of Verbano, from tree-lined avenues along the lake (such as the horse chestnut avenue, in Angera) to some beautiful sights even in town. Among the best known and loved excursions of this period, one we should mention is the **Vigezzina railway line, otherwise known as “The Foliage Train”**, and the experiences dedicated to this season organised by the Piedmont “Oasi Zegna” Park (see photo above).

What to do in autumn, on Lake Maggiore

Admire the view from the hills, visit the villages, and sample the seasonal products. Part Two of our guide, with advice from those who know our territory well.

The autumn beauty of Lake Maggiore. The guide to discover Verbano Province during the season of mushrooms and foliage

Autumn vineyards, panoramas and flavours: the advice of those who love and visit Lake Maggiore and its surroundings. Part One, with the opinions of Rossana Girotto, Alessandra Favaro, Filippo Ceretti and Ulisse Piana.

Translated by Ilaria Bizzotto and Nicole Dall'Osto

Reviewed by prof. Rolf Cook