

The Italian garden where Davines grew up

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PARMA — As some of the Davines Group's most iconic brands mark milestone anniversaries this year, among them Comfort Zone skincare celebrating three decades, the Parma company that built a beauty empire on a pharmacist's logic finds itself returning, as it always has, to its garden.

When Silvana and Gianni Bollati opened a small hair products laboratory in Parma in 1983, they built it around a conviction: that ingredients matter as much as formulation, that what a plant contains depends on how and where it was grown, and that a beauty company serious about its products should be serious about their origins.

Forty years on, even as the group generates around 300 million euro in annual sales across more than 90 countries, Davines remains entirely family-owned, unlisted, and acquisition-free. Both the haircare brand and Comfort Zone share the same Parma campus, the same ownership, and the same garden.

The Davines Group Village covers 300,000 square metres on the edge of Parma, a city already synonymous with Parmigiano Reggiano, prosciutto di Parma, and an almost fanatical attention to quality. Only 15 percent of the site is built on. The rest is a working landscape of orchards and agricultural plots cultivated according to regenerative organic principles, and at its heart sits the Scientific Garden, a 3,000 square metre living laboratory unlike anything else attached to a cosmetics company anywhere in the world.

The garden was designed by London-based studio del Buono Gazerwitz, but its intellectual references are entirely Italian. Its circular plan echoes Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian Man, while its layout is modelled on the *Giardino dei Semplici* (Garden of Simples) in Padua, the 16th-century

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botanical garden considered the ancestor of all botanical gardens worldwide and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The name is the old apothecary term for medicinal plants. For a company founded by pharmacists, the reference could not be more deliberate.



Davines' garden (*Credits: Italy Now*)

From plant to product

The *Orto Medico*, themedicinal garden, is where founding philosophy reasserts itself most forcefully. Echinacea supplies Davines' Naturaltech Well-being haircare line; *agastache mexicana* goes into the Energizing range; artichoke feeds the Detoxifying line. For Comfort Zone, the same garden supplies botanical actives cold-processed to preserve their functional compounds. Raw materials that cannot be grown on site are sourced through regenerative organic farms certified in partnership with the Rodale Institute.

"Davines' strength is that it combines genuine ethics with stunning aesthetic results," said Andrea Pagano, a musician and hair stylist at Capellaio Parrucchieri in central Rome. "The fragrances are addictive, the design makes a real statement, and hair truly comes back to life after a Davines treatment."

The garden that Silvana Bollati's pharmacist instincts made inevitable turns out, three decades on, to be one of the most serious and quietly radical places in the Italian beauty industry. Every rose,

every artichoke, every lemon tree is an argument about what beauty products should be made from, and why the place they come from matters as much as what they contain.

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