The presence of monumental trees in cities, hermitages, shrines, village squares and fountains has a lot to do with the deeper meaning that European society recognizes to the mature trees in their historical, cultural and social relation. Throughout the history of Humanity, the monumental trees have been present as foundational and encounter trees in all cultures and civilizations. On the other hand the need to enjoy the calm and the established order that reigns in a garden comes from ancient times, the Egyptians’ Fields of Aaru, the Garden of the Hesperides and the Garden of Eden are good examples. In origin destined for private spaces for the enjoyment, prayer or study, with the exception of the trees located in the public squares and fountains. Everything changed since the eighteenth century, with the Enlightenment, when was established the hygienists principles with which to improve the quality of life in cities. The industrial revolution fostered the human concentrations near the factories, and soon began to be felt the harsh consequences on the health of the population. Since then, the presence of trees and public gardens went from an aesthetic enjoyment to all, to a necessity indispensable to live in the city.

In relation to health should also keep in mind that the foundation of the first botanical gardens in Europe in the mid-sixteenth century, appear linked to the birth of the Renaissance universities in Pisa, Padua, Florence and Bologna, that would soon followed by the European universities of Zurich, Montpellier, Utrecht and Paris. At first they were for the cultivation of medicinal plants as a practical complement to medical studies. Shortly after the story of arboriculture know, between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, a period of great boom and splendour. Under the influence of the period illustrated the European botanic gardens were enriching their collections in the form of samples, sheets, propagules and plants, thanks to the material from expeditions conducted worldwide. One of the substantial changes of this time is the incorporation of palm and trees of the global flora, to the living collections of botanic or historic gardens, public spaces and private collections, forests arboretum of introduction and fruit tree collections, which transformed it into lush, leafy and exotic treed landscapes, treasuring today an extraordinary biodiversity of the planet.

The European and Mediterranean treed landscape owes much to this long history of study, trade and conservation. A significant portion of our most iconic and recognized landscapes are the result of this relationship. As the Mediterranean cypress in the nice Tuscany, where it is known that is not autochthonous, but if one of the most emblematic and profitable cultural element worldwide. Or the palm groves of date palms in southern Spain, with Palmeral de Elche declared as a World Heritage Site. Also keep in mind that many of these allochthonous tree species present in Europe, of non-invasive character, they are often threatened in their home areas, constituting that the specimens living among us, are authentic reserves “ex situ” of biodiversity. Monumental trees are part of the hallmarks of all European peoples. No matter much the species, age, size, shape,
structure or rarity, since the deeper meaning is mainly local, rooted in history, culture, traditions, beliefs and social memory. For this in many cases are trees with its own name, that have been contemplated and admired for generations. The phenomenon of emigration, the transformation of lifestyles, acculturation and an unfair race to highlight the “more” big, old, tall, heavy, corpulent and historic, has left the vast majority of them, and his legacy, helpless, harassed and threatened. All should be equally important, valuable and necessary for the old Europe.

In response to these considerations, the concept of “monumental tree” can be applied to isolated individuals, groups, sets, groves and forest formations of higher plants, both angiosperms and gymnosperms, autochthonous or allochthonous, which have one or more trunks enough differentiated. Regardless if its growth is horizontal, creeping, with arborescent structure in monocots, shrub or lianoid. We can be found in the natural, agricultural and urban. Or that by its scientific relevance, natural, cultural, historical and social pose, have a high environmental value, especially for local communities in which they find themselves.