

Final report

I arrived in Sicily from Germany at the beginning of September 2022. The journey was exciting because my flight was delayed and I had to spend the night in Catania. Without knowing a word of Italian and only be able to communicate through gestures, I was offered a place to sleep by a private person in Catania.

The settling-in period was short, as I was well introduced by the contact persons of Giacche Verdi and the other volunteers.

On my first day of work, I worked with the volunteer Ingram Huisman and Riccardo Samperi with Decespugliatori (grass cutting machine). We removed the dense bushes and thorns to reduce the risk of forest fires. I also harvested almonds in my first month and made a trip to Monte Egitto to map trees. The month of October was dominated by lumbrici (earthworms) for me. We as a volunteer community attended a worm workshop with Giacche Verdi. This gave us the idea to build a worm box in which the worms produce humus that can then be used for the garden. Together with Riccardo Samperi and other volunteers, we built this worm bin within 2 days. The rest of the year consisted of continuing the almond harvest and the olive harvest. I also visited the schools in Bronte and the surrounding area with Giacche Verdi, and gave talks on environmental protection.

The beginning of the New Year then consisted of pruning the pistachio and olive trees. We pruned the trees so that the tree pumped as much power as possible into the fruit. Then we had to pile up the cut branches. These two jobs took up the whole of January and February.

At the end of February, I planted myrtles with volunteer Marwin Launert and placed and filled the worm box we had previously built in the garden. The following weeks, we dug holes in the field and planted several varieties of plants.

The rest of the year consisted of protecting the forest area from fires, office work and olive tree pruning.

The year was a great experience that I will remember forever because of the open hospitality and 'joy of live' of the Sicilians. The way of life of the Sicilians was an inspiration for me, just like their communication in its theatrical way. What is considered completely exaggerated in Germany is common practice in Sicily and this is due to the Sicilians' desire to discuss. Food is also more important. With all the little things that embellish it, Sicily has become a second home for me.

Finally, I would like to thank the Foundation Manfred-Hermsen-Stiftung and Giacche Verdi for making this great experience possible.

Now here is a photo documentary containing my personal favourite photos from my volunteer year 2022-23.

