

# Echoes of Paradise: the Garden and Flora in Islamic Art | Visions of the Heavenly Garden and the Tree-of-Life

'Images of the paradisiacal Tree-of-Life evoke lushness, a profusion of shade-giving leafy branches and fertility.'

Often the notion of the paradisiacal Tree-of-Life is alluded to in Islamic art without depicting a specific type of tree. Stylised images do, however, always evoke lushness, a profusion of shade-giving leafy branches and fertility. Sometimes, the image of the tree is replaced by a luxurious vase that holds an exuberant, colourful bouquet of flowers. This motif goes back to pre-Islamic, Hellenistic notions of the Font-of-Life. It recalls both expensive flower displays in the arcades of Islamic garden pavilions, and the floral delights in the Garden of Paradise.

**Name:**

Prayer rug

**Dynasty:**

Hegira 1217 / AD 1802 Ottoman

**Details:**

Burrell Collection, Glasgow Museums

Glasgow, Scotland, United Kingdom

**Justification:**

Here, a stylised Tree-of-Life grows from a ewer, in itself symbolising the waters of Paradise.

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**Name:**

Decorative wooden panel

**Dynasty:**

Hegira 1st century / AD 8th century Umayyad

**Details:**

Islamic Museum, al-Aqsa Mosque / al-Haram al-Sharif

Jerusalem

**Justification:**

Fantastic trees and exuberant vegetal scrolls decorate this early Islamic frieze from Palestine.

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**Name:**

Wooden panel

**Dynasty:**

Hegira 1st–2nd century / AD 7th–8th century Umayyad

**Details:**

Museum of Islamic Art

Cairo, Egypt

**Justification:**

On this panel a leafy vine laden with grapes rises from a vase, the associations with fertility are borrowed from Hellenistic art.

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**Name:**

Panel decorated with a mosque

**Dynasty:**

Hegira 12th century / AD 18th century Husaynid Beys (Ottoman)

**Details:**

Sidi Qasim al-Jalizi Museum

Tunis, Tunisia

**Justification:**

The Font-of-Life motif in Islamic art survived for centuries. Here its religious overtones are reinforced by the depiction of a mosque above.

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**Name:**

Prayer rug

**Dynasty:**

Hegira 12th century / AD 18th century Ottoman

**Details:**

Museum of Mediterranean and Near Eastern Antiquities (Medelhavsmuseet)

Stockholm, Sweden

**Justification:**

On this prayer rug an abstract arrangement of flowers replaces the Tree-of-Life motif at the heart of the arch, often interpreted as the Gate of Paradise.

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