

The Plant Hunters

Throughout history, men and women have travelled the world to find and bring back plants from far and distant places.

They faced many different challenges to find, transport and care for these plants in order to introduce them successfully to the UK.



Let's find out about some of these famous plant hunters!

A New Discovery



Imagine that you are a plant hunter!

You have made a new discovery, finding a new plant that nobody has ever seen before.

- ? What will you call it?
- ? What does it look like?
- ? How does it take in water and light?
- ? How will you care for it?



Present Your Discovery

Imagine that you have brought your new plant back to Britain. Lots of people are waiting excitedly to see your new discovery and hear about what it is like.

Present your discovery, describing what your plant looks like and what it needs to grow.

The Plant Hunters



Jeanne Baret 1740 - 1807

Jeanne Baret was a French woman who accompanied her partner, the botanist Philbert Commerson, on an expedition to South America, Tahiti and Mauritius. She was the first woman to sail around the world. Women were not allowed on board ships at that time so she had to disguise herself as a man to join the expedition. She and Commerson introduced the bougainvillea to Europe, as well as around 70 other plants. Only one, the solanum baretiae, was named after her.

Tom Hart Dyke 1976 - Present

Tom Hart Dyke is an English horticulturalist and plant hunter. He is the designer of the World Garden at Lullingstone Castle. The World Garden contains around 8000 species of plants, many collected by Hart Dyke himself. Tom Hart Dyke was kidnapped on an expedition to collect a rare orchid in South America. He was held captive for nine months with his friend, Paul Winder. When he was released, he returned home and created his World Garden. He still hunts rare plants today.



Sir Joseph Banks 1743-1820

Joseph Banks was an English scientist who studied plants. He became famous when he took part in Captain Cook's first voyage to Brazil, Tahiti, New Zealand and Australia. He was President of the Royal Society for 41 years, and advised King George III on how to set up the Royal Gardens at Kew. He introduced the eucalyptus, acacia and the banksia, which was named after him. Altogether, around 80 species of plants are named after him in some way.

David Douglas 1799-1834

David Douglas was a Scottish botanist who worked at the Glasgow Botanical Gardens and the Royal Horticultural Society in London. He took part in three trips from England to North America. He introduced the Douglas fir in 1827, as well as several other pines, fir trees, the lupin and the flowering currant. Douglas died on an expedition to Hawaii while climbing a mountain called Mauna Kea.



I can design my own new plant and explain how it lives and grows.



Make notes about your plant.

How do the roots take in water?

How do the leaves collect light?

How does the stem help your plant stay upright?

How does the flower attract insects to make seeds?

How do you care for your plant?

Draw a picture of your new plant in this box. Make sure you draw the roots, stem, leaves and flower.

A large empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for drawing a plant. The box is positioned on the right side of the page, below the drawing instructions.

Match the facts on the left with the correct famous explorer and plant hunter on the right.

This plant hunter was involved in setting up the Royal Gardens at Kew.

This plant hunter introduced the Douglas fir, the lupin and the flowering currant.

This plant hunter was the first woman to sail around the world.

This plant hunter was kidnapped in South America while looking for orchids.

This plant hunter introduced the bougainvillea.

This plant hunter designed and created the World Garden, containing over 8000 species of plants.

This plant hunter introduced the eucalyptus and acacia trees.

This plant hunter died while climbing a mountain in Hawaii.

