



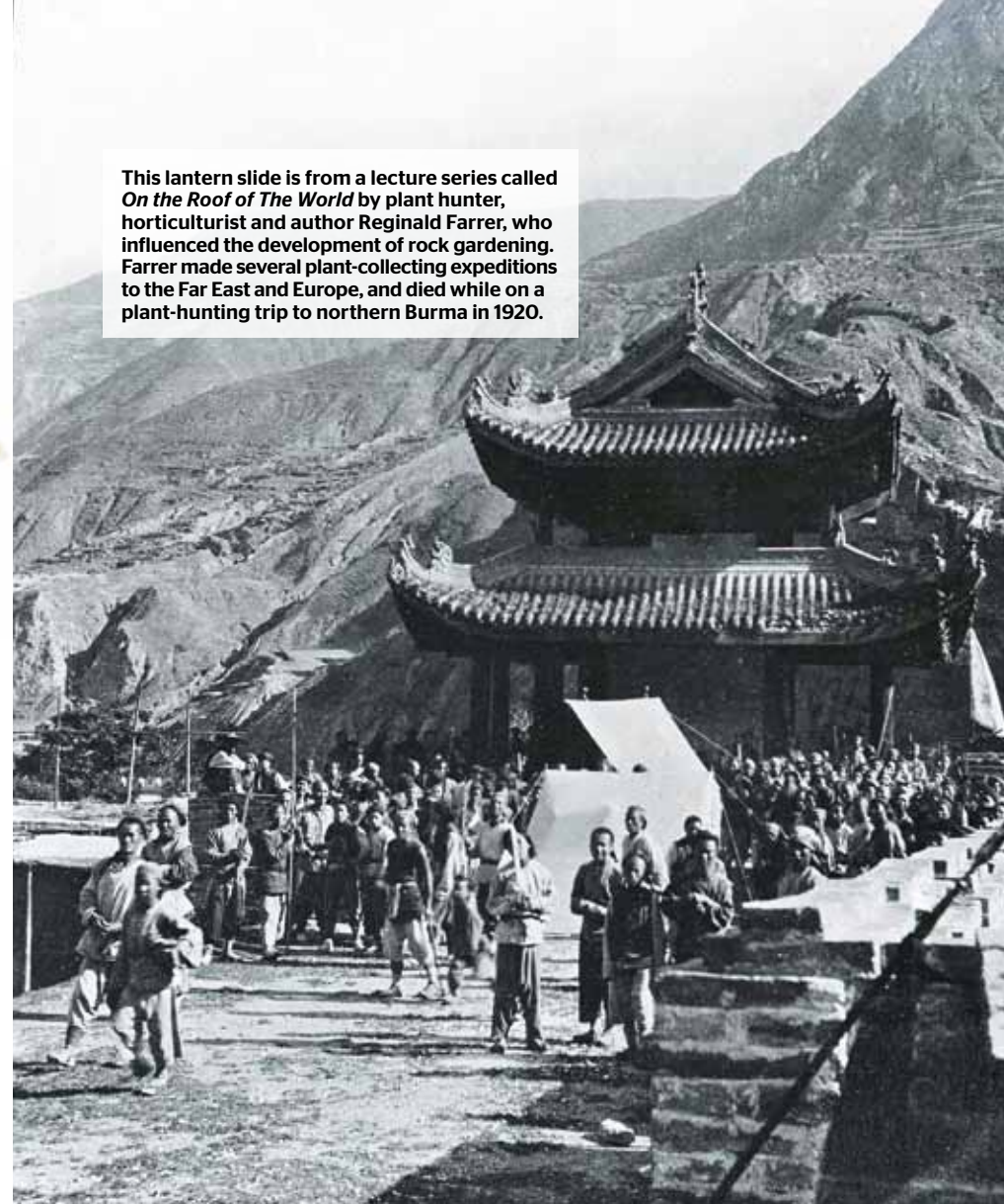
Gentiana farreri, drawn August 1915 in pencil and watercolour by Reginald Farrer (1880–1920), was found on an RHS-sponsored trip.



Susan Garnett-Botfield (1870–1954) in spats, 1937. She and her daughter Ruth McConnel are best known for introducing *Rhodhypoxis* from southern Africa.



Chinese passport used by James Herbert Veitch (1868–1907) during his 1891–93 trip to the Far East to collect plants for Veitch Nurseries. He described his travels in the book *A Traveller's Notes* (1896).



This lantern slide is from a lecture series called *On the Roof of The World* by plant hunter, horticulturist and author Reginald Farrer, who influenced the development of rock gardening. Farrer made several plant-collecting expeditions to the Far East and Europe, and died while on a plant-hunting trip to northern Burma in 1920.

Plant hunters exhibition

THE GARDEN MUSEUM

5 Lambeth Palace Road, London SE1 7LB; 020 7401 8865; www.gardenmuseum.org.uk
 ♦ The Plant Seekers exhibition, 17 Jul–21 Oct, daily 10.30am–5pm (Sat to 4pm in summer). Admission: adults £7.50, concessions £6.50, art fund/full-time students £3, children under 16 free. **Special offer: RHS members half price** – show membership card when buying tickets.



Claude Aubriet (1665–1742) was the first artist to accompany a plant-hunting expedition, and later became the royal botanical artist in France. This painting, using gold on vellum, is of *Jatropha multifida*, a plant from the Americas.

The plant seekers

Fanatical plant-hunting adventures – and close shaves – are celebrated in an exhibition of material from the RHS Lindley Library in association with the Garden Museum, London

Author: **Lucy Waitt**, RHS Images Curator. Images: **RHS Lindley Library**

The amazing wealth of plants growing in gardens today is testament to the debt gardeners owe a determined band of plant hunters who endured harsh terrains, political unrest and disease. Their motive was almost universally the desire for botanical and horticultural knowledge, and the excitement of introducing new plants to our shores. Their determination, deprivation and the danger they endured has changed the face of gardens forever.

By the 17th century, plant hunting was funded by wealthy sponsors seeking to embellish their gardens with rare and exotic new plants. Expeditions to Europe, Russia and North America by John Tradescant (c1570–1638) and his son John (1608–1662) introduced plants such as *Gladiolus communis* subsp. *byzantinus*, *Syringa x persica* and *Tradescantia*.

This is the first time that many artefacts from RHS Lindley Library are on public display in the Garden Museum's exhibition space.

- ♦ David Douglas (1799–1834) first visited North America in 1823. In 1834 his trampled body was found in a bull pit in Hawaii. His horticultural legacy remains in plants such as *Ribes sanguineum* (American currant), widespread in gardens today, and *Pseudotsuga menziesii* (Douglas fir).
- ♦ From 1904 onwards, George Forrest (1873–1932) amassed prodigious quantities of plants in western China including clematis, magnolias, primulas and rhododendrons, and discovered more than 1,200 species new to science. In 1905, after falling 60m (200ft), he walked across mountains for nine days, evading capture by Tibetan rebels, to find he had been reported dead by the Foreign Office. Forrest died on his final trip, leaving a multitude of plant introductions.

Significant introductions

Across the world, through the centuries, the finds of plant hunters have extended the range of what we grow, giving our gardens greater diversity and year-round colour. On occasion we have been able to reintroduce some plants back to their native countries when they have been lost. But is the role changing? Modern plant hunters such as the Wynn-Joneses (see p91) are still collecting, but the future may lie more in researching plants' natural growing conditions to aid better cultivation, as well as seeking out key plant-based compounds for scientific use. ●

Notable plant hunters

♦ RHS founder member Sir Joseph Banks (1743–1820) endured seasickness, blizzards and the threat of shipwreck on Captain Cook's first voyage to the Pacific (1768–1771). Banks developed a methodical approach to plant hunting, and in 1817 he arranged with tea inspector John Reeves to send plant specimens and artwork back to the Horticultural Society of London (later the RHS). Some of his plants include camellias, peonies and chrysanthemums.



Famous plant hunters event p83



This plant transportation box from about 1917 is stamped with the addresses of RHS Garden Wisley and JC Williams, who co-funded plant-hunting trips for George Forrest and Ernest Wilson. These trips supplied the plant collections at Grade II*-listed Caerhays Castle Gardens, Cornwall.



This woodcut illustration is probably the first published work by a plant collector. It is a map of the Mediterranean sea by Pierre Belon (1518–1564), from his 1555 publication *Les observations... trouvées en Grece, Asie, Iudée, Egypte, Arabie...* It includes observations from his travels through Greece, Crete, Asia Minor, Egypt, Arabia and Palestine.