

THE UNIVERSITY HEART PROJECT  
GLASGOW CALEDONIAN UNIVERSITY

# The Scottish Plant Hunters

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## Introduction - The Scottish Plant Hunters

Leaving Britain for distant shores between the late 1600s and 1900s, the Scottish Plant Hunters journeyed across foreign seas and land in search of mysterious plants. Some of the plants they brought back to Britain still appear exotic and alien-like, but many more have become so familiar in our gardens and landscape they appear naturalised as if they have always belonged in our native environment.

This celebrated small band of explorers embarked on long (and often arduous) voyages either commissioned by institutions such as the Horticultural Society of London and Glasgow and Edinburgh Botanic Gardens, while others were sponsored by wealthy individuals or travelled as independent plant collectors in search of what might be describe as 'green gold'. It is easy to forget today the potential monetary value of these exotic specimen whose characteristics could prove to be scientifically significant or provide medicinal cures and material uses for society. What is the same today as in yesteryear is the power of these plants to amaze, bewilder, fascinate and uplift.

All the plants in this catalogue are species introduced to our shores by the Scottish Plant Hunters and are selected here to transform the courtyards of Caledonian University into 'urban lounges' for learning and recreation. Chosen for their visual qualities and suitability to the benign Glasgow climate that is moderated by the gulf stream, the planting will attract users to the site encouraging both staff, students and the wider public to connect with each other and to use their outdoor space as an oasis and as a central hub projecting an atmosphere of focus, curiosity and learning at the very heart of the campus.

This booklet provides a small sample of the panoply of plants introduced by this group. The objective is to showcase the diverse characteristics of this eclectic mix of plants creating a 'fusion' landscape as a counterpoint to the neutrality of the modernist architecture.



*Encephalartos altensteinii*  
Collected by Francis Masson



*Strelitzia regina*  
Collected by Francis Masson

# Destinations of the Scottish Plant Hunters

**GEORGE DON - (1764-1814)**  
 Explored: Madeira, Tenerife, Cape Verde, Gambia Guinea, Sierra Leone, Brazil, Cuba , USA

**DAVID DOUGLAS - (1799-1834)**  
 Explored: USA, Portugal, Hawaii, Glapagos

**ROBERT FORTUNE - (1813-1880)**  
 Explored: China, Indonesia, Japan, Hong Kong, Philipines

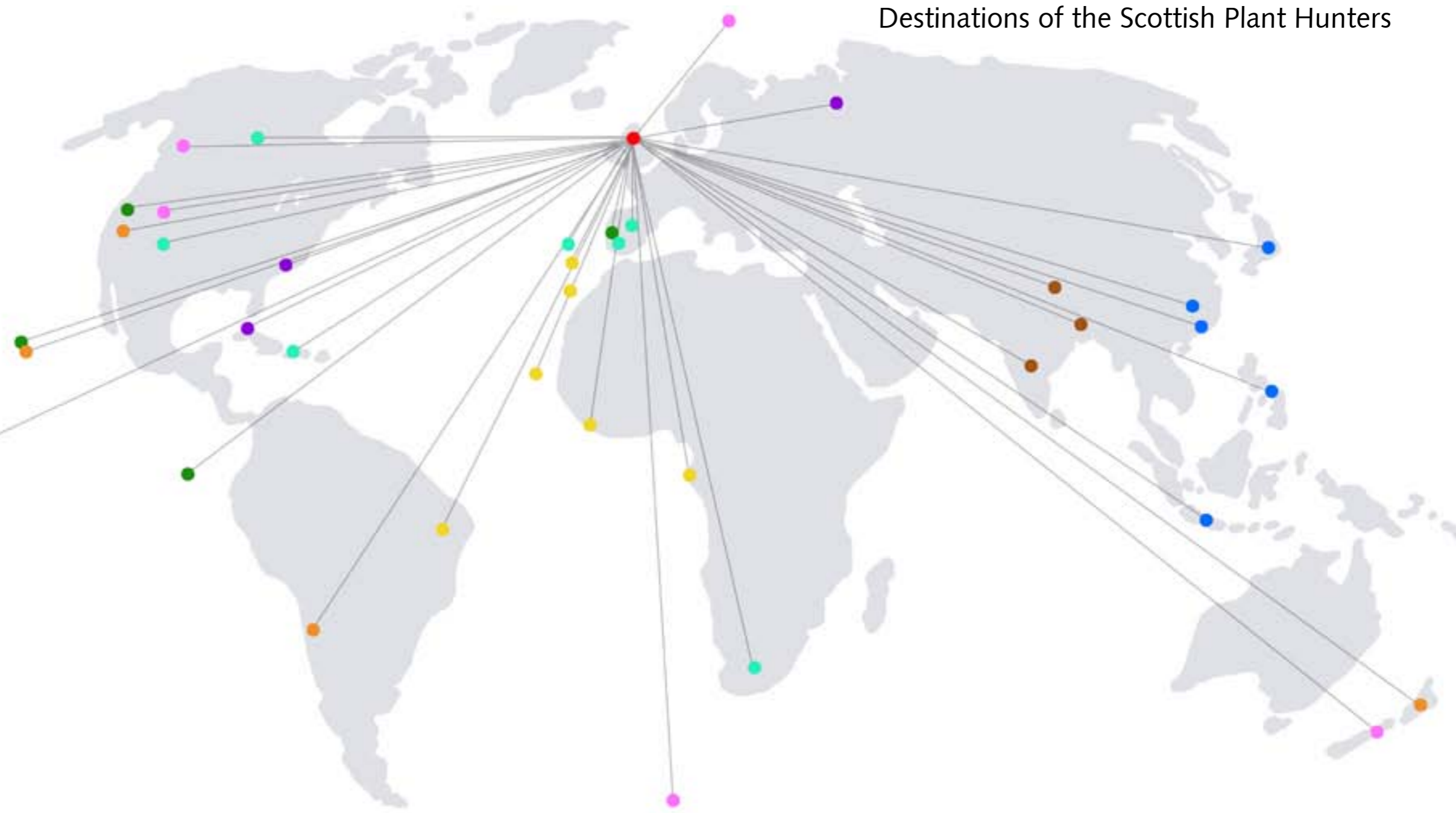
**JOHN FRASER - (1750-1811)**  
 Explored: USA, Cuba, Russia

**DAVID LYALL - (1817 - 1895)**  
 Explored: Antarctic Regions, Arctic Regions, New Zealand, USA

**FRANCIS MASSON - (1741-1805)**  
 Explored: South Africa, Spain, Portugal, Tenerife, Azores, West Indies, Canada, USA

**ARCHIBALD MENZIES - (1754-1842)**  
 Explored: USA, New Zealand, Tahiti, Hawaii, Chile

**GEORGE SHERRIFF - (1898-1967)**  
 Explored: India, Tibet, Bhutan



GEORGE DON



DAVID DOUGLAS



ROBERT FORTUNE



JOHN FRASER



DAVID LYALL



FRANCIS MASSON



ARCHIBALD MENZIES



GEORGE SHERRIFF

*Larix lyallii*

Collected by David Lyall (1817 - 1895), who travelled to the Arctic and Antarctic regions, Canada and USA, *Larix lyallii*, or Alpine Larch, is a coniferous species native to northwest America. This hardy tree can survive very low temperatures in thin rocky soils. It grows 10-25m tall with pale blue needles that turn golden yellow in the autumn.



*Araucaria araucana*

Known as the Monkey Puzzle or Chile Pine (*Araucaria araucana*) is an evergreen conifer native to Argentina and Chile. It was introduced to Britain in 1795 by Archibald Menzies (1754-1842) who was a naval surgeon and Scottish Plant Hunter. It is a stately tree with branches covered in sharply pointed leaves and it was often used in the 19th Century to create impressive avenues. The common name references the visually complex structure and spiny leaves of the tree suggesting that to climb it would mystify even monkey. It can grow to a height of 50m and it was officially declared a Natural Monument of Chile in 1990. The Araucanos people consider the tree to be sacred and still use the timber for construction, firewood and the seeds form part of their diet.





*Pseudotsuga menziesii*

The Douglas Fir is the second tallest tree in the world and can grow to a height of 100m in its natural forest habitat. It is native to western North America and was first introduced to Britain by David Douglas (1799-1834). As a fast-growing conifer with high quality and durable timber it is grown commercially and used in construction.



*Meconopsis grandis*

The Blue Poppy is the National Flower of Bhutan and known there as 'Eitgel Metog Hoem'. According to the Royal Society for the Protection of Nature in Bhutan they have become extremely rare in their native habitat having been transferred from the landscape into local gardens. The plant flowers in July and August with bright blue flowers. It was discovered by George Sherriff (1898-1967) who visited the region in the 1930s and 1940s.



## *Iris foetidissima*

An evergreen shade tolerant perennial growing to 80cm, *Iris foetidissima* has glossy rich green architecturally structured leaves. The classic purple flowers are followed by large pods that open to display bright orange-red seeds which persist into winter. It was introduced to Britain by George Don (1764-1814) and has traditional medicinal properties.



*Hamamelis virginiana*



*Hamamelis virginiana* is a species of witch-hazel native to eastern North America. It is a deciduous, open, upright winter-flowering shrub with spidery crumpled petals of yellow/orange that form in clusters and leaves that turn yellow in autumn. It was discovered by George Don (1764-1814) who was chosen by the Horticultural Society of London to travel the world hunting for plants. It can grow up to 6m and it has been used as a traditional medicine to heal wounds.



*Arbutus menziesii*

This beautiful evergreen tree is native to the western coast of North America from British Columbia to California. It usually grows to approximately 25m and the richly coloured orange-red bark naturally peels away in thin sheets when mature to reveal a silvery smooth surface beneath. It produces urn-shaped white flowers in the spring that attract bees and bright red attractive berries in the autumn that provide food for fruit-eating birds such as robins. It was introduced to Britain by Archibald Menzies (1754-1842).



*Kalmia latifolia*

These evergreen shrubs have simple, leathery dark glossy leaves with cup-shaped pale pink flowers that bloom in spring or summer in large cluster formations. It is a dense bushy shrub of medium size growing to around 1.5-2.5 metres. Commonly known as the Mountain Laurel it was introduced to our country by George Don (1764-1814) from its native region of the eastern United States where it is the state flower of Connecticut.



## Tolmiea menziesii

Originally introduced to Britain by Archibald Menzies (1754-1842), *Tolmiea menziesii* is naturally found in western North America in forest habitats. It has various common names including Thousand Mothers and The Piggyback Plant and it forms an eye-catching ground cover of decorative leaves. It prefers moist and shady conditions and the leaves have traditionally been used for medicinal purposes.



## Gaultheria shallon



Native to western North America *Gaultheria shallon* is an evergreen woody shrub with tough leathery leaves growing to a height of between 0.2 and 5m. In its natural habitat this low woody shrub spreads under the canopies of Redwood and Douglas Fir trees. It is commonly known as Lemon Leaf or simply *Gaultheria* and prefers shaded conditions. It was introduced to Britain by David Douglas (1799-1834) and is now a familiar plant in contemporary gardens grown for its pretty pinkish, urn-shaped flowers followed by aromatic, dark purple berries that attract wildlife.



*Corylopsis pauciflora*

Native to western Japan and Taiwan, the Buttercup Winter Hazel as it is commonly known is a deciduous shrub or small tree with simple toothed leaves and small bell-shaped pale yellow flowers that blossom in early spring often with a mild fragrance. It is a medium sized multi-stemmed shrub that reaches approximately 1.5m. It was introduced to Britain by Robert Fortune (1813-1880) who travelled mostly in China, Indonesia, Japan, Hong Kong and the Philippines.



*Allium cernuum*

Introduced by John Fraser from America *Allium cernuum* is known by its illustrative common name of Nodding Wild Onion. It produces delicate purple-pink flowers formed on graceful chandelier-like heads that bloom from June to July. Growing to a height of 0.45m it is a vigorous and easy to grow plant particularly suited to meadows where it can form large clumps. *Allium cernuum* was brought to this country by John Fraser (1750-1811) who travelled in America and Cuba collecting plants for Catherine the Great.

Rhododendron arboreum is a large evergreen shrub or small tree with a rounded habit reaching a maximum height of 20m. It originates from Bhutan, China, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand and was introduced to Britain by George Sherriff (1898-1967). The glossy dark green leaves are tough and leathery and the trunk grows in a crooked and multi-branched form with reddish brown bark. It blossoms with bright red/pink flowers that grow in clusters. Rhododendron arboreum is the national flower of Nepal.

Rhododendron arboreum





## Sophora tetraptera

*Sophora tetraptera* is commonly known by its Maori name Kowhai meaning yellow in reference to the unusual and brightly coloured flowers. In New Zealand it is found in its native habitat on the edges of forests or montane open areas and now also in local gardens. It is a small to medium evergreen tree growing between 4.6 and 12 m. This distinctive tree reached the UK though Archibald Menzies (1754-1842) and has come to be regarded as New Zealand's national flower, despite having no official status.



## *Calycanthus occidentalis*



## *Trillium grandiflorum*

Native to North America *Trillium grandiflorum* grows to a height of approximately 50cm and produces white flowers that appear in Spring. The roots of the plant were traditionally used by Native Americans for a variety of medicinal purposes and the foliage can also be cooked and eaten. It was introduced to Britain by Francis Masson (1741-1805) who visited South Africa, Spain, Portugal, Tenerife, Azores, West Indies, Canada and the USA.

A bushy shrub growing to a height of 2.5 to 4m with dark green leaves that have a rough texture and turning yellow in Autumn. The deep red flowers blossom in summer between June and September. It was discovered by David Douglas (1799-1834) who brought it back to Britain from its native California where it prefers to grow in dappled shade along streams and rivers.

## *Amelanchier alnifolia* var. *semiintegrifolia*

*Amelanchier alnifolia* var. *semiintegrifolia* is a native shrub of California but found in other areas of western North America. Introduced to Britain by David Douglas (1799-1834), it grows in open woods, along canyons and on hillsides and is often associated with Redwood forest and mixed evergreen forest. All parts of the plant have historically been used to make medicinal treatments and the wood has been used in craft and tool making. It flowers between March and June and fruits appear from June to August.



## *Dicentra spectabilis*

*Dicentra spectabilis* is a Chinese plant with an Award of Garden Merit (AGM) from The Royal Horticultural Society. This spectacular plant has red heart-shaped flowers with white tips that dangle from the arching stems in late spring and early summer. It grows to a height of 60cm and prefers light shade. The plant was introduced to Britain by Robert Fortune (1813-1880) who was appointed the Curator of Chelsea Botanic Garden in 1846. In 1848 he was commissioned to go to China to collect tea seedlings that he later took to Calcutta in 1851 marking the beginnings of the tea trade.



### Acer circinatum

Acer circinatum grows as a large shrub of approximately 5-8m tall in the understory below taller trees. Occasionally it will develop to form a small to medium-sized tree. It is deciduous with palmately-lobed leaves that turn red or orange in autumn. It is native to western North America and was introduced to Britain by David Douglas (1799-1834).



## Churchman landscape architects

Phelps House 17 Heath Road  
Twickenham Middlesex TW1 4AW

t: +44 (0)20 8891 0007  
f: +44 (0)20 8892 0905  
e: mail@churchmanla.co.uk  
w: www.churchmanla.co.uk

