

Plant Hunting



AN ACTIVITY TO DO AFTER VISITING GEELONG BOTANIC GARDENS

Walk around a heritage botanical garden like Geelong, and you will see the impact plant hunters have had on the natural and built environment. 'Plant hunting' refers to collectors and botanists who travel the world looking for interesting species. A species might lead to a new crop, a new medicine or material derived from a plant (such as rubber) - or the plant might be desirable for its rarity or its conservation value. Plant hunting was all the rage in the 19th century, at the time of the settlement of Australia and the establishment of the Geelong Botanic Gardens as well as many other important gardens.

In the Conservatory, you may have seen a replica Wardian case. Invented in 1829 and designed to transport plants on long journeys, Wardian cases were portable airtight cases with glass windows. Soil and plants inside created a moist environment that could maintain plants for a long time without additional water. They were used widely by botanists including plant hunters on behalf of botanic gardens across the world.

A Wardian case is an early example of a climate-controlled environment. This lesson can be the springboard for a project in which students design their own built microclimate. It can lead to learning about settlement, economic botany, colonisation and changing perspectives on Indigenous traditional knowledge, and sustainability.

Victorian Curriculum Links:

Level 3, Level 4 - History: VCHHC069, VCHHC070, VCHHK079

Level 3, Level 4 - Geography: VCGGC073, VCGGK077, VCGGK082

Level 3, Level 4 - Design & Technologies: VCDSCD028



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resources

directions

Explorers and plant hunters

- Students learn about the motives and methods of one or more major plant collector or botanist whose work has influenced Australia.
- Possibly best known is [Sir Joseph Banks](#) (1743-1820), or [Sydney Parkinson](#) (1745-1771), the botanical artist who sailed with Captain Cook.
- Students may enjoy the art of [Ellis Rowan](#), botanical artist of the late 1800s.
- The Australian National Herbarium has a [long and inclusive list of botanists and collectors](#). Look at the column showing their main occupation to explore with students some of the many motivations for plant collecting.
- Have students read the material at [Trees for Cities](#) on the [Wonderful World of the Plant Hunters](#) or on the [Plants, People, Planet - Plant Hunters web page](#).
- And if they think plant hunting is all in the distant past, have them read this list of [species discovered in 2018](#) by botanists for the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew (London, UK).

- Focus on the history of plant collectors of Victoria and of your local area. Explore the geographical links between the places they went from to look for plants.
- Use the links at left as resources for student research into who was motivated to collect plants in what areas, for what purpose.
- Students choose a focus, either a specific plant hunter, a botanical artist, or a modern botanist.
- Students research and create a poster, presentation or report about their botanist, botanical artist or plant collector.
- Their report or presentation should include a basic biography, a map or maps of key places they went to, and a timeline or and images of the species they collected and any local relevance.
- A statement on their contribution to the scientific understanding of botany would be desirable.



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