

GOVERNMENT GARDENS PLANT GUIDE

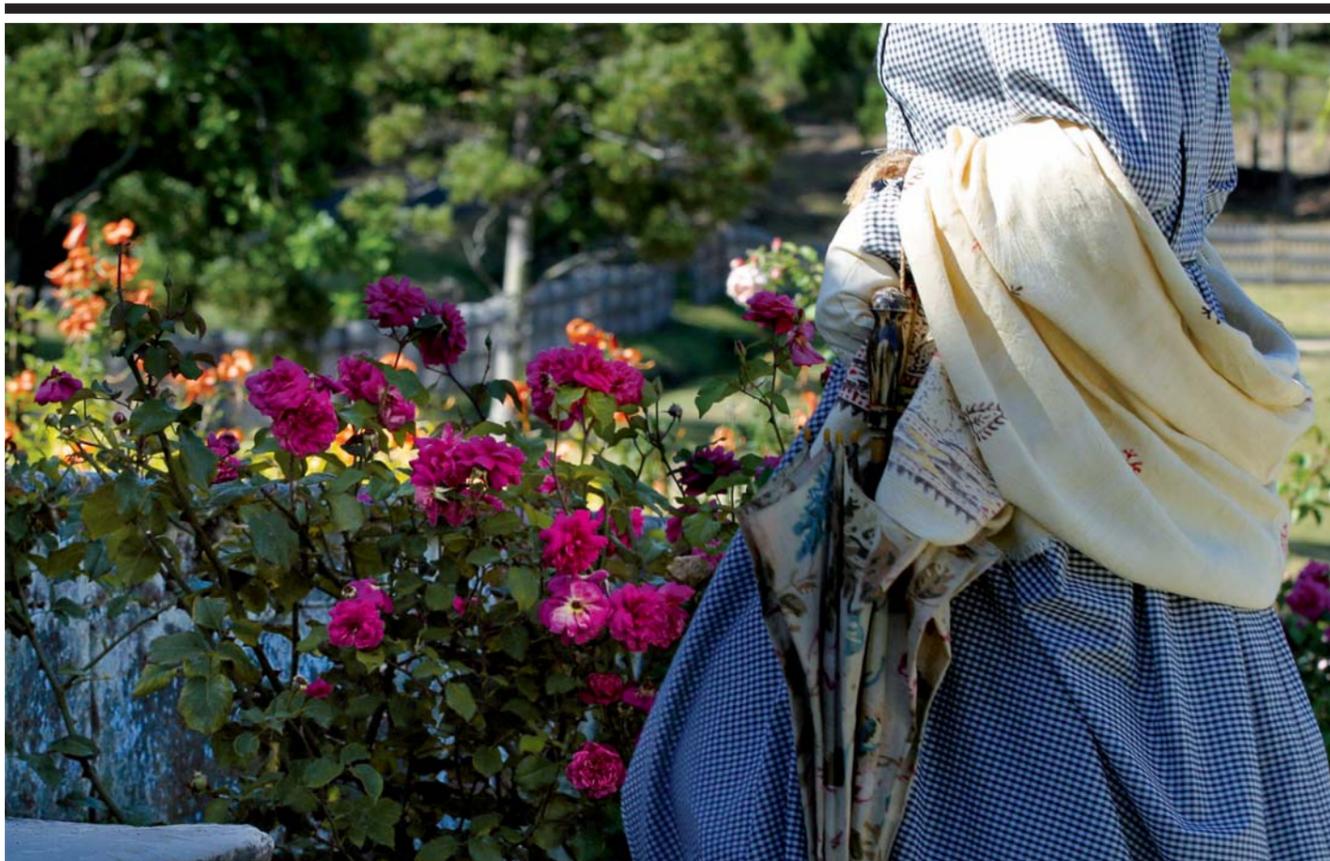
'I have made a good garden for myself in which I mean to collect all sorts of plants, and have made a canal and erected a fountain. Some place of the kind was much wanted for the ladies of the settlement to walk in and I believe my garden is pronounced quite delightful.'

Commandant Champ in a letter to his mother, 1846

In 1849, several scientific groups joined together to form the Royal Society of Tasmania for Horticulture, Botany and the Advance of Science, the first Royal Society outside of Britain. Members had connections with Kew Gardens and other nurseries. This society took responsibility for managing Hobart's Government Gardens, later to become the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens.

Among Royal Society members were numerous Port Arthur administrators and officials including Commandants William Champ and James Boyd.

Many plants were ordered from England. Cuttings, tubers, corms, rootstock and seeds were also collected by plant enthusiasts on the eight-month journey to Van Diemen's Land. The genes of some of Port Arthur's plants map the ports of call in South America, South Africa and India. Boyd alone ordered hundreds of plants, including dahlias, marjoram and fruit trees.

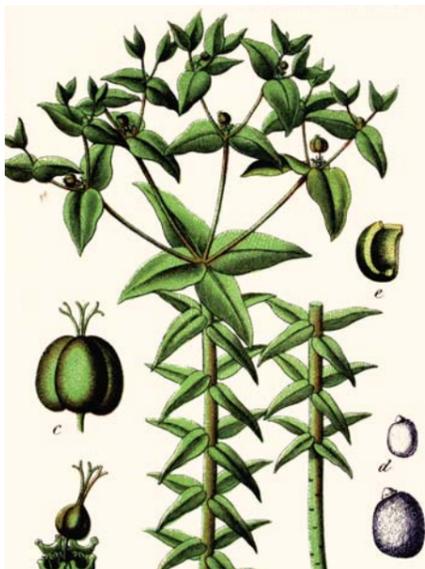


Glaucium flavum (yellow horned poppy)

Euphorbia lathyris (caper spurge)

Native to southern Europe, this plant is actually toxic to humans, even though the common name comes from the close resemblance of the seed to the edible caper. Caper spurge has naturalised in several of the gardens around the Site, and is likely to persist from the penal settlement era.

Illus Credit - 1



Glaucium flavum (yellow horned poppy)

The short lived flowers of this plant, native to Europe, North Africa and the Middle East, are followed by a woody seed pod that can be up to a foot long!

See left. Illus Credit - 2

Hedychium gardnerianum (ginger lily)

The ginger lily is native to the Himalayas in India, Nepal and Bhutan. Volume 9 of *The Botanic Register consisting of coloured figures of Exotic Plants cultivated in British Gardens; with their History and Mode of Treatment* (Edwards, Sydenham, 1823), claims that this plant had only lately been received into England from the Calcutta gardens. In England, this plant was grown in stove houses, where bottom heat enabled plants from the tropics to grow and flower.

Illus Credit - 3



Lupinus polyphyllus (garden lupin)

This plant was discovered in the north-west of North America in the 1820s by Mr David Douglas, who also introduced the Douglas fir to Europe. Seeds of 'blue and yellow lupins various' were being advertised for sale by Mrs Wood in the *Hobart Town Courier* by November 1829.

'This splendid lupine is now become so common that we can hardly conceive how gardens must have looked without it, though it is not yet quite twenty years that seeds of it were first sent to this country...'

The Ladies' Flower-garden of Ornamental Perennials,
Mrs (Jane) Loudon, 1843

Illus Credit - 5



Melianthus major (honey flower)

A common plant in colonial gardens, *Melianthus* would have been admired for its unusual leaves and growth habit, as well as for its large red flower spikes, unlike any plant found in traditional English gardens. It is native to South Africa, and was collected by sailing vessels on their way from England to the Australian colonies and other trading ports.

Leonotis leonurus (lion's tail)

Native to the south of Africa, this is another plant that would have been limited to indoor cultivation in most parts of Britain. In the Australian colonies it was able to be grown in the open ground, attaining a more impressive size and character than that of potted indoor specimens.

Illus Credit - 4





Melianthus major

Illus Credit – 6



***Quercus robur* (English oak, common oak)**

The trees that surround Government Gardens and line the avenue up to the Church are mostly English oaks. This is the most common forest tree in Britain. The botanic name *robur* means 'strength' in Latin, and refers to the hard timber for which the trees have been valued since prehistoric times.

Sir John Franklin, the Lieutenant Governor of Van Diemen's Land from 1836-43, provided the Port Arthur Penal Settlement with young oak, ash and elm trees, some of which may survive today. Deciduous European trees were some of the earliest brought to the new colony, bringing a sense of comfort and familiarity in an otherwise foreign landscape.

Illus Credit – 7



***Rosa spinosissima* (syn *R. pimpinella*) (Scots rose, Scotch rose, Burnet rose)**

The Scots rose, or Burnet rose, is native to a large part of Europe, including the British Isles, and also Asia. However, it wasn't until the start of the 19th century that double cultivars were developed in Scottish nurseries (varieties with more than a single row of petals).

The small flowers are followed by characteristically black rose 'hips' (seed heads). The stems are typically covered in bristles and prickles, and sucker to create a dense mounded shrub.

Illus Credit – 8



***Myosotis sylvatica* (forget-me-not)**

The forget-me-not is so common in Tasmanian gardens that many people consider it weedy and tend to pull it out. A common flower in woodlands throughout Britain and Europe, this would have been one of the early introductions to the gardens in Port Arthur.

The following poem appeared in an April edition of the *Launceston Courier* in 1829, and captures the sentimentality that people at this time had for the forget-me-not:

*There is a flow'r I love so well
That grows within my garden plot
My willing pen its name shall tell
The lovely blue 'forget-me-not'*

*'Tis not within the rich man's hall,
But near the honest peasant's cot,
Where grows the lovely flow'r, we call,
The modest blue 'forget-me-not'.*

*It does not boast a rich perfume,
The rose-bud's glory 't has not got;
It does not want a warmer bloom,
The brilliant blue 'forget-me-not'*

*Through life I've lov'd this simple flow'r
Nor ever be its name forgot
In prosp'rous time or adverse hour
The humble blue 'forget-me-not'*

*And should I die an early doom
Let no false tear my mem'ry blot;
But let there spring around my tomb,
The azure blue 'forget-me-not'*

Illus Credit – 9



***Salix babylonica* (weeping willow)**

The weeping willows that once grew in this garden, and in many other sites throughout Australia and Britain, were taken as cuttings from a tree growing on the grave of Napoleon Bonaparte on the island of St Helena. A quick growing shade tree popular for ornamental plantings, willows have also traditionally been used medicinally and for basketry.

In 1845, the Commandant of Port Arthur investigated which Tasman Peninsula outstations had suitable conditions to plant willows for basket-making, and supplied these with cuttings from his own garden.

Illus Credit – 10



***Solanum aviculare* (kangaroo apple)**

Thomas Lempriere, the Commissariat Officer at Port Arthur from 1833-48, wrote in his journal about the culinary value of various native plants. He stated: 'the *Solanum*... or kangaroo apple, is a very handsome plant and the fruits, when perfectly ripe, pleasant to the taste'. – 1838

In 1828 the kangaroo apple was featured in an article in the *Hobart Town Courier*, which commented: '...we have had occasion, this season particularly, to remark the great luxuriance of what is called the Kangaroo apple, or New Zealand potato, a species of *Solanum* common to this country and New Zealand... a beautiful evergreen shrub, with dark verdant leaves... It is covered with small round apples, which when ripe eat exactly like bananas, and a sort of yams grow at its root, it is both ornamental and useful.'

Illus Credit – 11



***Solidago canadensis* (golden rod)**

Native to North America and Canada, this plant is an herbaceous perennial, which means that it dies back to the ground after flowering in autumn, with new growth not emerging until the weather warms up in spring.

In the *Catalogue of plants under cultivation in the Royal Society's Gardens, Queens Park, Hobart Town, Tasmania* (1865), the only species of golden rod listed is *Solidago laevigata*, which is probably an outdated synonym for *S. sempervirens*. One of the challenges in restoring historic gardens is determining the correct varieties of plants for which the names might have changed several times over the course of history.

Illus Credit – 12



***Rosa chinensis* (China rose)**

China roses were introduced into the west towards the end of the 18th century, and enabled the many cultivars of rose available today to be developed. China roses have the quality of repeat flowering, although they bloom most heavily in the spring.

The roses growing in Government Gardens include 'La Marque', a variety released in 1830 with large, fragrant, white flowers.

See right. Illus Credit – 13

2



Rosa chinensis (China rose)

Illustration Credits

- 1 Krause, E.H.L., Sturm, J., Lutz, K.G., *Flora von Deutschland in Abbildungen nach der Natur, Zweite auflage*, vol. 7: t. 33 (1902). Illustration contributed by www.BioLib.de
- 2 *Glaucium flavum* Crantz [as *Glaucium luteum* Crantz] sea poppy, yellow horned poppy Sowerby, J.E., *English Botany, or Coloured Figures of British Plants*, 3rd ed., vol. 1: t. 66 (1863).
- 3 *Botanical Register*, vol. 2: t. 157 (1816) [S. Edwards]. Illustration contributed by the Missouri Botanical Garden, USA.
- 4 *Botanical Magazine*, vol. 14: t. 478 (1800) [S.T. Edwards]. Illustration contributed by the Missouri Botanical Garden, USA.
- 5 *Botanical Register*, vol. 13: t. 1096 (1827) [M. Hart]. Illustration contributed by the Missouri Botanical Garden, USA.
- 6 Bonelli, Giorgio, *Hortus Romanus juxta Systema Tournefortianum*, vol. 7: t. 66 (1783-1816).
- 7 Woodville, W., Hooker, W.J., Spratt, G., *Medical Botany*, 3rd edition, vol. 1: t. 10 (1832). Illustration contributed by the Missouri Botanical Garden, USA.
- 8 Jacquin, N.J. von, *Fragmenta botanica, figuris coloratis illustrata*, t. 124 (1809). Illustration contributed by the Missouri Botanical Garden, USA.
- 9 Sowerby, J.E., *English Botany, or Coloured Figures of British Plants*, 3rd ed., vol. 7: t. 1107 (1867). Illustration contributed by the New York Botanical Garden, USA.
- 10 *Illustrations of the forest flora of north-west and central India*, t. 59 (1874) [W.H. Fitch]. Illustration contributed by www.BioLib.de
- 11 *Solanum laciniatum* Aiton [as *Solanum reclinatorum* Dunal] kangaroo apple Mordant De Launay, F., Loiseleur-Deslongchamps, J.L.A., *Herbier général de l'amateur*, vol. 5: t. 307 (1817-1827) [P. Bessa]. Illustration contributed by Natural History Museum, London, UK.
- 12 Step, E., Bois, D., *Favourite flowers of garden and greenhouse*, vol. 2: t. 127 (1896-1897) [D. Bois]. Illustration contributed by the Missouri Botanical Garden, USA.
- 13 *Edwards's Botanical Register*, vol. 23: t. 1922 (1837) [S.A. Drake]. Illustration contributed by the Missouri Botanical Garden, USA.