

RHS Libraries



Gardeners, plant breeders, nurserymen, botanists:
finding out about the people who shaped our
gardening history



Sharing the best in Gardening

RHS Libraries

Lindley Library 020 7821 3050 library.london@rhs.org.uk
Wisley Library 01483 212428 library.wisley@rhs.org.uk
Harlow Carr Library 01423 724 686 library.harlowcarr@rhs.org.uk

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Books and Journals

Dictionary of British and Irish botanists and horticulturists: including plant collectors, flower painters and garden designers / Ray Desmond, with the assistance of Christine Ellwood (1994).

Copies are held on Quick Reference shelves. Entries will lead you to book or journal articles, and provide guidance on where personal papers or collections are held.

British Gardeners: a biographical dictionary/Miles Hadfield, Robert Harling, Leonie Highton (1980).

Gives brief biographies from the 16th century onwards. Includes many illustrations.

Horticultural Directory

An annual publication, started by the **Journal of Horticulture** in 1861 and continued by the **Gardeners' Chronicle** until the 1920s. It lists gardens, arranged by counties, listing for each garden its owner, head gardener, and post town (for sending requests to visit). Only a few issues are held, but working files containing photocopies covering 1870, 1890, 1905, and 1924 are held in the Libraries research rooms – one for gardens and one for nurseries.

Biographies

Our libraries include many biographies. Search the library catalogue using the Subject field for books about individuals. This will also retrieve book chapters.

Gardeners – many individuals who made and maintained large gardens or country estates have not been recorded. Some who served on RHS or other horticultural committees have brief

biographical details held on file in the Library, and may be mentioned in gardening periodicals of the time, or in the **Proceedings of the RHS**.

Look in volumes of the **RHS Index to Journal and List of Awards** (up to 1985). Brent Elliott's **The Royal Horticultural Society: a history 1804-2004 (2004)** is a good source for summaries of individuals' contributions to the RHS and to horticulture throughout the period. For the early 20th century, the periodical **Garden Life** (1901-1928) featured a series of profiles of head gardeners.

Recipients of the RHS's highest honours, (VMH, Veitch Memorial Medal, and Associateship of Honour) are recorded in alphabetical and chronological lists held on file in the Library.

Was my ancestor a Fellow of the RHS?

Ordinary members were called Fellows during the early years of the Society. Some membership lists were published for the Horticultural Society, in the 1810s-20s, 1832, and c.1860. RHS membership lists (name and address only) were published between 1870 and 1929.

Plants named after people

This can prove difficult. Plants are named after people in all walks of life, including a plantsman's family or friends. Search for journals announcing new cultivars and plant awards, or nursery catalogues introducing the plant to cultivation. A mention may be included of the individual for which the cultivar is named.

Who does your garden grow?

Alex Pankhurst (1992) traces the background of 100 famous cultivars and the individuals commemorated.

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Wisley Library RHS Garden Wisley, Woking, GU23 6QB. T: 01483 212428 E: library.wisley@rhs.org.uk

Harlow Carr Library RHS Garden Harlow Carr, HG3 1QB. T: 01423 724686 E: library.harlowcarr@rhs.org.uk

Archives

Individuals are represented in both the official archive of the RHS and in collected archives relating to the history of horticulture. Archives of horticulturists such as **William Robinson** and **E.A. Bowles** include correspondence with prominent horticulturists and with less well-known individuals. The Library's collections include papers of 19th to 21st century plant hunters, and of garden designers such as **Gertrude Jekyll**, **Percy Cane** and **Russell Page**, as well as the archives of less well-known amateur gardeners. An oral history collection records the voices of 20th century horticulturists and RHS staff.

Collections are in the process of being catalogued, with searchable catalogues available on-line via the Archives Hub <https://archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/>. Catalogues specify the site at which the archive is held and conditions of access. Please make an appointment and request archive material in advance as some collections are held in offsite storage.

Art and Images

Appointments with our curators will be needed to view original works, but digital images can be viewed in the Libraries research rooms. Please ask staff to log you on.

Notable figures from the history of horticulture are represented in our portraits collection. Comprising oil paintings, photographs and prints, digital images of many of these are available. Oil portraits of past RHS Presidents and other significant portraits hang in the Lindley Library and meeting rooms at Vincent Square.

Over 700 **Cartes de Visite portraits** (photographic society calling cards) mostly of 19th century botanists and gardeners are available by request or in digital form.

Valerie Finnis

Part of her general archive includes her own photographic archive. A good selection of the people portraits include many major gardening figures from the twentieth century and many women gardeners.

Botanical artists

Search the library catalogue at www.rhs.org.uk/libraries using the name of the artist to find out if we hold drawings by them.

Images for any form of publication (including on a website) must be requested from www.rhsimages.co.uk.

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Electronic resources

Parks and Gardens UK

www.parksandgardens.org/. Extensive database browsable by name, area, period, heritage organisation, etc. Includes former parks and gardens which have now been lost.

Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest.

www.historicengland.org.uk/. The National Heritage List for England is the only official and up to date database of all nationally protected historic buildings and sites in England. Search by place, post code or listing number, or use the advanced search for more options.

Biodiversity Heritage Library

www.biodiversitylibrary.org. Digitised copies of books, journals and papers from a consortium of natural history libraries. Search by author, title or date of publication.

JSTOR (Walk-in Access Resource)

Full text journal articles from over 500 titles from JSTOR's Ecology and Botany, and Arts and Sciences III collections.

Walk-in access resources are digital resources subscribed to by the Library. Library visitors can use them free of charge – please ask library staff to log you on.



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