

Among interesting perennials are the luxuriant *Myosotidium hortensia*, the Chatham Island forget-me-not; blue poppies such as *Meconopsis betonicifolia*, *M. grandis* and the hybrid 'Lingholm'; and many members of the Iridaceae such as *Dietes*, *Diplarrhena*, *Libertia*, *Orthrosanthus*, and *Watsonia*. The very distinctive *Arisaema* do well here, as do an increasing number of plants in the Convallariaceae, including *Disporum*, *Polygonatum*, *Smilacina*, *Tricyrtis*, and *Uvularia*.

PLANTING CONDITIONS

The windy conditions discourage the planting of large specimens, though the shallow soil in some places makes this physically impossible, while the severe infestation of honey fungus, *Armillaria* sp., precludes the direct transplanting of woody plants, which eventually fall victim to the fungus. Lifted rhododendrons are potted into very wide, shallow containers for a year or two before being surface planted, a method which has become the rule without cultivated beds, by simply placing the rootball on the soil and mounding up with the chosen medium. This seems to encourage establishment and may slow the invading *Armillaria*. Where rhododendrons are planted on mossy rocks or stumps, particular care has to be taken during dry periods as the lack of mains water or any distribution system makes watering practically impossible and establishment unlikely.

The Role of the Veitch Nursery of Exeter in 19th Century Plant Introductions[©]

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The story of the Veitch family of Exeter is more than the story of the British love of plants. It is about adventure, guts, and single-minded determination. John Veitch was born in Jedburgh, Scotland, in 1752 and at age 19 travelled to London to seek a career and his fortune. Veitch first worked at a nursery in London. However he was soon offered a job as land agent by the Baronet Sir Thomas Acland to look after his estate of 35,000 acres in Devon.

In 1808, in return for his labours, Veitch was rewarded with a lifetime lease on land at Budlake, a few miles east of Exeter, to start a nursery business selling trees and shrubs. The nursery flourished and by 1832, already in partnership with his son James, he moved to larger premises at Mount Radford, Exeter, thus starting the famous Exeter Nursery.

In the second half of the 19th century, the U.K. was a confident country, largely at peace with its Empire and dominant in industries such as iron, coal, and cotton. Much of the population had moved into cities which produced a need for agricultural produce, which in turn brought new improved techniques for growing crops. These techniques were also available to horticulture, everything from fertilisers, manures, and pesticides to lawnmowers and other labour-saving machines. The time was ripe for the nursery trade to exploit the world for plants to sell to a newly affluent population. Up until now plant introductions had been largely through scientific institutions such as botanic gardens together with a few wealthy patrons on large estates.

The Veitches wanted to exploit the expanding market for horticultural novelties and to achieve this decided to send trained plant collectors to the new lands opening up throughout the world.

Veitch's first such collector was William Lobb, who was followed by his brother, Thomas. William Lobb spent the southern winter of 1841 in Brazil where he explored the Organ Mountains, discovering *Begonia coccinea*, *Passiflora actinia* (syn. *P. actinea*), and a swan orchid, *Cynoches pentadactylon*. He then went on to Chile via Mendoza and the Upsallata Pass, over the Andes to Concepcion. Travelling south, he entered the Araucaria forest, where he collected large quantities of seed of *Araucaria araucana*. This was the first time seed of the monkey puzzle was sent to Europe in commercial quantities, the first package arriving at the nursery contained some 3000 seeds. While in Chile, William Lobb also discovered and collected *Desfontainia spinosa*, *Mandevilla splendens*, *Hindsea violacea*, and *Tropaeolum azureum*. Moving north he collected in Ecuador, Peru, and southern Columbia, returning to the U.K. in 1844.

He set out again in 1845 for another 3-year expedition, starting from Rio de Janeiro but this time calling at Chiloe Island where he collected *Berberis darwinii* and *Escallonia rubra* var. *macrantha*. On the mainland he collected *Embothrium coccineum*, *Crinodendron hookerianum*, and Chile's national flower, *Lapageria rosea*. Also collected on this expedition were *Tropaeolum speciosum*, *Luma apiculata* (syn. *Myrtus luma*), *Luma chequen* (syn. *Myrtus ugni*), *Ugni molinae* (syn. *Myrtus chequen*), *Saxegothaea conspicua*, *Pilgerodendron wiferum* (syn. *Libocedrus wifera*), and *Fitzroya cupressoides*.

Meanwhile, Veitch sent Thomas Lobb to the far east to collect tropical species including orchids, to enable the nursery to take advantage of the expanding market for tender exotic conservatory plants (this market being aided by improvements in glass making technology and the repeal of the glass tax in 1845). These new introductions meant not only a greater range of species for the gardener but a greater basis for hybridisation and hence even further expansion of the market for novel plants.

On his first expedition (1843 to 1847) Thomas Lobb explored in Singapore, Penang, and Gunung Ledang on the Malay Peninsula, Java, and Burma. His second expedition in 1848 took in Calcutta, Sarawak, the Phillipines, and Burma. Plants of *Vanda caerulea* collected by Thomas Lobb on this expedition fetched prices of £300 each back in the U.K.

William Lobb's third expedition in 1852 was to North America where, in Calveras County in the Sierra Nevada, he collected seed of the newly discovered *Sequoiadendron giganteum*. He returned again to North America in 1854, collecting until 1860, and then staying on in California where he died in 1864. Sir Harry Veitch wrote 'The singular success which rewarded his [William's] researches is, perhaps, unparalleled in the history of botanical discovery; the labours of David Douglas not even forming an exception.'

The Lobb brothers were just the beginning, over the succeeding years the firm of Veitch, from its Exeter and later its London nurseries, sent out 21 collectors — and at least two of the Veitches themselves collected — including the famous Ernest 'Chinese' Wilson. The Veitch Nursery continued to operate in Exeter until 1969 when Mildred Veitch, the last managing director with no heirs to succeed her, sold the remaining sites at Alphington and Exminster to St. Bridgets Nursery.