

(Download pdf) Flower Hunters

## Flower Hunters

*John Gribbin, Mary Gribbin*  
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**John Gribbin, Mary Gribbin : Flower Hunters** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Flower Hunters:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. greatBy C. M. StahlSince the 1935 publication of Paul de Kruifs Microbe Hunters writers have been borrowing his style. de Kruif must roll in his grave imagining that he created a style of writing that appears to be deathless. It is a biographically driven history of science spanning a length of time to show how technology and cumulative scientific literature became available to researchers, expanding scientific

knowledge. John Gribbin is a science historian whose books have been reviewed on this web site many times. He always acknowledges his wife but this time she is the lead author. It had a new twist both on the style and subject matter. John's books tend toward physics but this one botany. The de Kruif style was to select eleven main characters (and countless minor players in the history of floral collecting. This allowed them to track history of botany from the late 17th century to the early 20th. With the exception of Linnaeus, all to the characters were from the British Isles. Gardens became the rage in England in the early 18th century. They were status symbols for everyone. The wealthy created botanical monuments to themselves; the poor had small plots or even a pot to show off their gardening prowess. This spurred the flower and tree industry and created the flower hunters. The book begins with John Ray who has permanent place in history and includes Carl Linnaeus, Joseph Banks, and Joseph Hooker who likewise have hundreds of years of press. They are all noble and have advanced botany significantly but their stories are often told. The Gribbins provide new information about them in the book but it is some of the other players that were more interesting to those of who are not flower scholars. Like early ornithology, the history of botany is filled with people with medical degrees. The yen for botanical searches was greater than the prestige and money that came with the medical profession. The hunters were naturalists and did field research across the entire world. They served the collectors well, often at the peril of their own health. Some died young and others were able to retire to relative luxury. They were scientists, intent on understanding details of their findings. They sought to systematize plants and to determine health value. They discovered palliatives, dyes and ornaments. As technology surged during this period so did the botanical field. When glass prices dropped significantly Nathaniel Bagshaw Ward devised the Wardian case which was a bottle that improved the ability to transfer specimens in all weather conditions and for long periods of time. Months on a ship traveling around the world to the British destination ruined many specimens prior to the 1850s. Marianne North was the only woman who was honored with a chapter though other women were mentioned in the book. She began her botanical career after the age of 40 and traveled to many different countries painting depictions of many flowers. There were images of hers shown in the two sections of plates included in the book. The 19th century portraitist Julia Margaret Cameron photographed her and that is also in the plates. The prose was always lively. The plates were beautiful. The history was as sublime as it was informative. Readers of the Gribbins expect no less and were not let down in Flower Hunters. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Very well presented, very well researched, and an enjoyable read. By Michael Papay Mary and John Gribbin have given us a gift in their researching and writing this book. Of the three "plant hunting" books I have read, this is unquestionably the best and most interesting. Modern botany wants us to begin where Linnaeus wanted us to begin, with him, but Mary and John Gribbin take us back to the truth, to the inimitable John Ray. From there the Gribbins portray the fascinating lives of plant explorers and the importance of their contributions to horticulture, medicine, and agriculture. It is not a textbook, but a well told story woven together from the chapters of many lives and countless adventures. I found myself halfway through the book before I felt I'd even begun. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating! By quilt history nut The history of the plant hunters is well laid out in this book. I especially liked the discussion at the end of each chapter of what plants an individual plant hunter contributed to our modern gardens.

The flower hunters were intrepid explorers - remarkable, eccentric men and women who scoured the world in search of extraordinary plants from the middle of the seventeenth to the end of the nineteenth century, and helped establish the new science of botany. For these adventurers, the search for new, undiscovered plant specimens was something worth risking - and often losing - their lives for. From the Douglas-fir and the monkey puzzle tree, to exotic orchids and azaleas, many of the plants that are now so familiar to us were found in distant regions of the globe, often in wild and unexplored country, in impenetrable jungle, and in the face of hunger, disease, and hostile locals. It was specimens like these, smuggled home by the flower hunters, that helped build the great botanical collections, and lay the foundations for the revolution in our understanding of the natural world that was to follow. Here, the adventures of eleven such explorers are brought to life, describing not only their extraordinary daring and dedication, but also the lasting impact of their discoveries both on science, and on the landscapes and gardens that we see today.

From Publishers Weekly Veteran science writers, the Gribbins (Richard Feynman: A Life in Science) tell the stories of 11 18th- and 19th-century botanical explorers. Two were Swedes, including the renowned taxonomist Carl Linnaeus, who botanized in Lapland. The others came from Great Britain, including Joseph Banks, who sailed with Captain Cook, and Francis Masson, sent to South Africa by the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew. With David Douglas, sent to North America by the Horticultural Society of London to obtain plants to sell to affluent gardeners, came the age of plant exploration for profit. Robert Fortune was sent to China to collect tea plants for the East India Company. Richard Spruce obtained seeds of the South American tree that produces quinine, the drug used to treat malaria. Joseph Hooker brought rhododendrons from India to Victorian Britain. Marianne North searched several continents for material for her flower paintings. The adventures of these botanists, who often risked their lives in search of exotic species, should make for exciting reading, but the Gribbins' dry biographical sketches fail to capture the drama. 30 color and bw illus not seen by PW. (June) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. A

compelling romp through the history of plant collecting. Stephen Moss, *The Guardian* About the Author Mary Gribbin and John Gribbin are among the best-known current popular science writers. Together, they have written many acclaimed books, including *Ice Age*, *FitzRoy*, *Stardust*, and *Big Numbers*. Mary is a Visiting Fellow at the University of Sussex, and a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society with a special interest in plants and exploration. John is also a Visiting Fellow at the University of Sussex, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, and the author of books including *The Universe: A Biography*, *In Search of Schrodinger's Cat*, and *Science: A History*.