

## Garden Ramblings

Now, wouldn't you think that a plant hunter called Richard Spruce would have introduced another plant for this Christmas Season? Sorry but no. He is remembered for bringing an important medicine to so many people especially in India. Quinine from the bark of the Chinchona,

After several forays into Europe for plants, especially alpine plants, Spruce headed for South America. He was able to send supplies of quinine to friends there who had contracted Malaria. Some time later he wrote about an area where he was working that was plagued by mosquitoes . Despite days of being covered in blood from the bites he eventually went down with malaria himself, although he did not recognise he had that for a long while. The link between the bites and the disease had not been made yet, although the medicine made from the bark had been used for ages by the local people of the rain forest, and was well known by Spanish "invaders", In fact he was so ill before he took the medication that his porters reckoned he would die and swapped his belongings for rum.

He agreed to send as many seeds and saplings of the Cinchona tree to India as he could and despite collecting them in the middle of a civil war, in 1861 over 400 plants and bags of seed arrived there and five years later nearly 2500 trees were growing. (Just a little whoops!) They were not of the right variety and the drug was rather weak. Still by grafting the variety the Dutch had taken to the East Indies that problem was solved. Spruce's tree was a fast growing strong tree and the Dutch one produced .better Quinine but rotted easily.

I trust none of you will need Quinine this festive season. Tonic water does or did contain a small amount so Plantation managers could get a supply that happily mixed with gin.

So go out and wander round your garden in the new year. Consider all those who brought new plants to us from around the world and toast them in your favourite tippie. I will raise a cup of coffee and thank those who thought it was a good idea to ship the beans to us.. Take time to have a good look round and decide what you would like to add or get rid of next year. I have just had a Russian Vine removed that possibly would have covered at least half the Village Hall so now there is a huge space to fill. Lots of plant hunting for me.

