

# Garden Ramblings

## JULY

When Joseph Banks realised he could not go on the second voyage with Captain Cook -I am sure you remember he had wanted to take two French horn players- he decided to find someone else . Cook was going to look for land to the south of Australia. Antarctica would be a surprise.

Banks thought that Francis Masson would be ideal as he was an experienced gardener rather than a botanist and he might have a eye for plants that would be interesting to have in the new KewGardens. It was decided that Masson would go as far as South Africa, to the Cape which was a Dutch Colony.

Masson was amazed at the variety of beautiful plants he saw, and travelling on a large ox drawn wagon he had plenty of room for specimens. There is a small brown folder in Kew today that records 865 new plants found there by Masson, Many from the south Cape grew abundantly in poor sandy soil. These included ixia, gladioli new irises and red hot pokers. Those are properly known as kniphofia but I have problems working out how to pronounce that. In my garden they are those nip-offy things.

He also brought back several species of Protea. They are often found now in mixed bunches of flowers around Christmas time. The King Protea gives us all hope. I must admit to giving up on my spring sprouting broccoli though. The seeds of the protea arrived at Kew in 1775 and took nearly thirty years to flower. Another bloomed in 1826 and the next time in 1986. Since then, it has got the hang of things and flowered more regularly.

Masson then travelled widely and brought very many plants to this country, from Madeira, The Azores, Tenerife, The West Indies and North America. All this because of excess luggage. I must go and get the kitchen sink out of my hand luggage.