

# Garden Ramblings

## JUNE

I went on a voyage of discovery to an interesting garden centre between Attleborough and Wymondham . Two plants were new to me and were a great discovery. One is a portulaca with vibrant flowers and fine succulent leaves and the other is Dorotheanus with thicker, larger succulent leaves.

Joseph Banks went a lot further but did bring back 1,400 new plants. He was a very wealthy man who sailed with Captain Cook who was being paid to study the transit of Venus as it passed in front of the Sun. Somehow this was to enable astronomers to work out the size of the Universe. Don't ask me more.

Banks took along servants, artists, plant collectors, one of whom was also a doctor and two greyhounds, presumably for hunting but knowing whippets of that family, I bet they just rested on a cushion and demanded a blanket. He also took 20 tons of equipment that included casks of preserving fluid, jars and microscopes. On that voyage he visited South America, Tahiti, New Zealand and Java., discovering many plants were named for him with the name banksia. We grow Banksia in our gardens which are also known as Australian Honeysuckle with a great deal of nectar in their flowers that look a bit like a bottle brush - hence their other name- and have strange cones.

The area now known as Botany Bay was where Banks discovered a vast number of plants. Captain Cook had originally named it after his ship the Endeavour but renamed it to show its importance for plant discovery

Banks wanted to go on Cook's next voyage but was refused by Cook because of the sleeping arrangements needed for his party, if built could have caused the ship to capsize. Banks wanted 16 staff this time which included two French horn players ! I reckon they were the real problem.

After this he went on no more long voyages but did set up a notorious expedition to Tahiti to collect seeds of Breadfruit. He considered it a most nutritious plant and wished it to be taken to the West Indies as food for slaves. Today we possibly view this with suspicion wondering who benefitted from this, the workers or the plantation owner? Of course, if I mention this voyage was captained by a man called Bligh and the ship was the Bounty you can see why Banks did not get the seeds then. Bligh did go again later and was more successful.

Banks also sent lists of food plants that would grow well in Australia which was a considerable help to convicts and settlers in establishing the new colony. I do wonder if his experience on his voyage to Australia coloured his desire to feed people well. 7860lbs - 3500kilos of sauerkraut was taken on the voyage which did prevent life threatening scurvy but possibly stayed in his memory.