

# Horticulturist Caradoc brings passionate plantsmen to book

BY ANITA SMITH

LOOK at almost any garden in this country and they will probably all have one thing in common — a plant introduced by the nursery firm of James Veitch & Sons.

Veitch was the first British nursery to send collectors to foreign lands in search of new and exotic plants.

The first collector, William Lobb, returned from South America with what have since become well-known plants including the Monkey Puzzle tree, fuchsias, and eschallonnias. His most famous discovery was the Wellingtonia redwood.

The Veitch family — whose first nursery was in Exeter — eventually introduced so many new plants that in 1905 they listed around 1,500 of the most important in a book called Hor-

tus Veitchii. Copies of it are so rare that they can fetch anything between £500 and £1,500.

To make it more widely available and commemorate the centenary of its first publication, freelance horticulturist and Veitch enthusiast Caradoc Day has funded a facsimile edition of it. A limited number of 1,000 numbered copies have been printed in hardback, costing £95.

Caradoc, who was lucky enough to get hold of an original boxed edition of the book, said: "My version has been a labour of love. It's been a passionate hobby of mine which I am now trying to make a living from to continue my research."

"Hortus Veitchii was one of several books published by James Veitch & Sons.

"They raised the world's

first orchid hybrid in Exeter. It was a hugely controversial achievement, a bit like genetic food today because a lot of people thought it was wrong for nurserymen to be 'playing God' and creating hybrids. They later created hundreds of new orchids which made them world famous."

The Veitch Nurseries legacy doesn't just include trees and shrubs, but also climbing plants, house plants, fruits and vegetables.

When their collections were first introduced in this country they were so expensive only aristocrats could afford them.

The Veitch firm was established in Exeter while John Veitch was working as the head gardener at Killerton House. Many of the mature trees at the estate today were planted by him. It was

his son James who sent out the first plant collectors, and his son, James Jnr, moved the business to London.

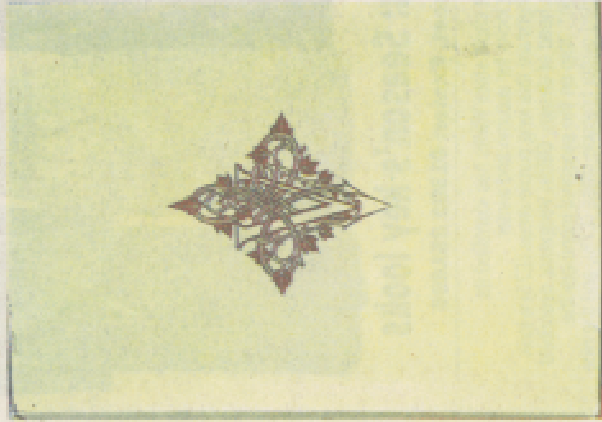
A connection did remain in Exeter as his brother established Robert Veitch & Son, now a subsidiary of St. Bridget Nurseries.

It was while working for St Bridget's that Caradoc became interested in the story of Veitch and where his research began.

"I've also discovered the Veitch Nurseries introduced hundreds of other plants not listed in the book and I would like to write a book about those," he said.

"I would like to set up a Veitch conservation garden, hopefully somewhere near Exeter."

For more information about the Veitch Nurseries, or Hortus Veitchii, visit [www.caradocday.co.uk](http://www.caradocday.co.uk)



Original copies of Hortus Veitchii can sell for between £500 and £1,500 OLIVER SANDERS EE190906\_0503\_02