



**The Birmingham Botanical
Gardens and Glasshouses**



**The
Victorians**

Introduction

The purpose of this booklet is to highlight the opportunities for pupils at Key Stage 2 to study history at The Botanical Gardens.

Examples of activity sheets and background information are also included which have been designed to be easily adapted to suit the needs of pupils working at a range of levels.

Much of the work at the Botanical Gardens is cross curricular in nature and the activities can easily form the basis of tasks which incorporate other subject areas.

Activities:

History of the Botanical Gardens

A range of artefacts, maps, photographs and books are available which trace the development of the Gardens from Victorian times. Please see the Gardens' Facebook and Twitter pages or visit the library for more information.

Victorian Architecture

Pupils can look for evidence of new and old structures on buildings such as the glasshouses, bandstand and cottage.

Art and Design

Pupils can study the use of plants as the basis for designs on e.g. William Morris wallpaper and textiles through sketchbook activities.

Spot the difference

Find the spot in the Gardens where you can see a view like the one in the picture. What are the differences between the picture drawn in 1875 and the view you see today?



E. H Wilson

At the age of 21, Ernest Henry Wilson was a young botanist about to become a lecturer at the Royal College of Science. Before he was 40, he had become famous for his travels in the Far East, especially China. What did he do in China? He hunted for plants. Before he died in 1930 he had found 3000 new species, 1000 of which he brought back home to be grown in the gardens of Britain. One of the gardens where these plants were grown and can still be seen growing, was the Botanical Gardens in Birmingham.

In 1898, Veitch Nurseries asked the Director of Kew Gardens in London if they knew anyone who would go to China in search of the Handkerchief Tree. People had seen pressed examples of the leaves and the flowers. Now they wanted the real thing. They wanted leaves to plant in their gardens.

The Director told them to try E.H. Wilson and Wilson decided he would apply for the job. He told them in his application that he was born in Chipping Campden in 1876 and had worked at the Botanical Gardens in Birmingham. Although he was about to become a lecturer, he was willing to try the expedition to China.

His first trip was in 1899. It lasted until 1902. It was not an easy trip. China, at the time was a dangerous place for Europeans because of the Boxer Rebellions. Despite the dangers, he managed to make friends with the Chinese who helped him in his work. They helped make the trip a big success. He not only found the Handkerchief Tree but 400 other plants as well.

Since he had been so successful, Mr Veitch sent him off again in 1903. Once more he was successful. New roses, rhododendrons, primulas and poppies were all brought home. He was now becoming famous.

His fame even spread to the USA. The Arnold Arboretum in Boston, America's greatest collection of trees also wanted new plants.

They sent Wilson on his travels again, this time not just to China, but to Japan, Korea, Australia, New Zealand, India and Africa as well. Although his job was to look for trees, he also found, in Tibet, a lily that has been grown in British gardens ever since. This lily nearly cost him his life. The only way to where it was growing was across a narrow gorge. While trying to get across, a rock fell and crushed his leg. An English doctor would probably have amputated it and his travelling days would have been over. The Chinese doctor managed to save it.

Then in 1927 he became Director of the Arboretum. His travelling days now really were over. He settled down to growing many of the plants he had brought back from his travels. In his days hunting plants he had survived many dangers, but in 1930 his car skidded on a wet road in Massachusetts. He and his wife were both killed.



This picture shows Wilson (centre) taken at the Gardens around 1894



Lilium regale



Handkerchief
Tree
Davidia
involucrata

Victorian Plant Hunters

Look carefully at the plants brought to this country by E. H Wilson. Why did he choose them?

Name of plant:

Country it came from:

What interesting features does it have?

Name of plant:

Country it came from:

What interesting features does it have?

Name of plant:

Country it came from:

What interesting features does it have?

Name of plant:

Country it came from:

What interesting features does it have?

Name of plant:

Country it came from:

What interesting features does it have?

Name of plant:

Country it came from:

What interesting features does it have?

Name of building:
Use:
Date of Building:
Evidence for date:

Draw and describe some of the structures of this building which are original

What materials were used to build it?

What evidence do you have that it is original?

Draw and describe any structures which you think have been added on later to this building

What are these new structures made of?

Why do you think the new structures were added?