

# Robert Fortune: The Plant Hunter Who Changed the Way We Eat

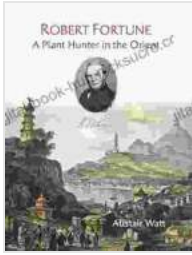


## Robert Fortune: A Plant Hunter in the Orient

by Simone Filippetti

★★★★☆ 4.5 out of 5

Language : English



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Robert Fortune was a Scottish plant hunter who traveled to China in the mid-19th century. He introduced a number of important plants to the West, including the tea plant, the camellia, and the rhododendron. His work had a profound impact on the way we eat and garden today.

## Early Life and Career

Robert Fortune was born in 1812 in Kelloe, Scotland. He showed an early interest in botany and gardening, and at the age of 14 he was apprenticed to a local nurseryman. In 1842, he was hired by the Royal Horticultural Society to travel to China to collect new plants.

## First Trip to China

Fortune arrived in China in 1843. He spent the next three years traveling extensively throughout the country, collecting seeds and plants. He was the first Westerner to see the tea plant in its natural habitat, and he smuggled out thousands of seeds and cuttings.

## Second Trip to China

Fortune returned to China in 1848 on a second expedition for the Royal Horticultural Society. This time, he focused on collecting plants from the

interior of the country. He was particularly interested in finding new varieties of tea plants.

## **Impact on Western Horticulture**

Fortune's work had a profound impact on Western horticulture. He introduced a number of important plants to the West, including:

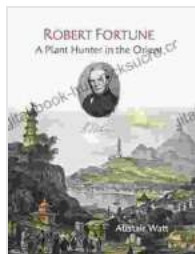
- The tea plant: Fortune's of the tea plant to the West led to the development of a global tea industry. Today, tea is one of the most popular beverages in the world.
- The camellia: Fortune introduced several species of camellias to the West, including the popular japonica camellia. Camellias are now widely grown as ornamental plants.
- The rhododendron: Fortune introduced a number of species of rhododendrons to the West, including the popular hybrid rhododendron. Rhododendrons are now widely grown as ornamental plants.

In addition to these major s, Fortune also introduced a number of other plants to the West, including the winter jasmine, the weeping willow, and the bamboo. His work helped to expand the range of plants available to Western gardeners and to create the beautiful gardens we enjoy today.

## **Legacy**

Robert Fortune died in 1880, but his legacy lives on. He is considered one of the most important plant hunters in history, and his work has had a profound impact on the way we eat and garden today.

Fortune's story is a reminder of the importance of exploration and discovery. He was a pioneer who traveled to the far corners of the world to bring back new plants that have enriched our lives.



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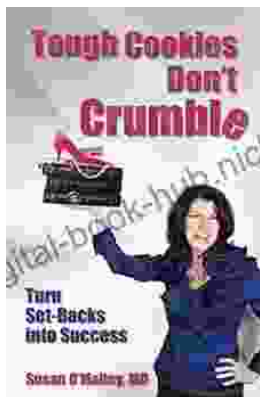
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