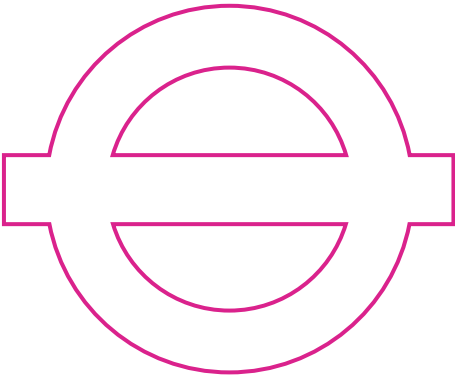


ART ON THE
UNDERGROUND

BRIXTON BOTANICAL MAP



MAYOR
OF LONDON



TRANSPORT
FOR LONDON
EVERY JOURNEY MATTERS

Introduction

This map of green spaces in Brixton addresses the legacies of the **British empire**, it celebrates local botanical education, community gardening and food growing initiatives, whilst looking at gardens as places to consider injustice, oppression and colonial legacy.

Most trees and plants in our parks, gardens and squares did not originally grow in British soil. Many of London's plants were imported as seeds by naturalists who were engaged in colonial activity of all kinds, from plantation and slave-ownership to East India Company business. Botany, the study of plants, emerged as a respectable scientific discipline in the 18th century, and plants' intercontinental journeys became integral to the colonial project, changing global landscapes forever.

Britain's 18th and 19th century passion for botany and plant hunting relied on colonial commercial networks. Among the most prominent botanists were men whose knowledge of Caribbean plants stemmed from their involvement in the slavery business, such as Sir Hans Sloane and the MP and Lambeth resident, George Hibbert.

Addressing these troubling histories is as urgent as ever. This map explores our relationships to plants, green spaces, the world and each other. A further reading list and glossary are provided for more information and to signpost the generous researchers, writers and scholars whose work has informed the research for this map.

In the wake of the Coronavirus pandemic, celebrating green spaces and community energy has been at the forefront of our minds. Lambeth hosts a wealth of community gardening and food growing initiatives. By unearthing sensitive histories, we highlight gardens and green spaces as sites of learning, loss and remembrance, and of radical action and possibility.

This map has been produced in the context of recent debate on the need for botanical gardens and horticultural institutions to explore their collections' colonial roots. Following the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests and discussions around public statues which glorify colonialism in public spaces, questions around botany have also come to light. This map highlights the colonial roots of plants in our parks, gardens and squares today, and how these histories are hidden in plain view and woven into the soil beneath our feet.



Reading list

Ariella Aïsha Azoulay, 'Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism' (London: Verso, 2019)

Jill H Casid, 'Sowing Empire: Landscape and Colonization' (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2004)

Sria Chatterjee, 'The Long Shadow of Colonial Science', Noëma, (11 March 2021)

TJ Demos, 'Decolonizing Nature: Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology' (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2016)

Kate Donington, 'The Bonds of Family: Slavery, commerce and culture in the British Atlantic world' (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 2019)

Corinne Fowler, 'Green Unpleasant Land: Creative Responses to Rural England's Colonial Connections' (Leeds: Peepal Tree Press Limited, 2020)

Catherine Hall, Nicholas Draper, Keith McClelland, Katie Donington, Rachel Lang, 'Legacies of British Slave-Ownership: Colonial Slavery and the Formation of Victorian Britain' (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014)

Dan Hicks, 'The British Museum: The Benin Bronzes, Colonial Violence and Cultural Restitution' (London: Pluto, 2020)

Jamaica Kincaid, 'My Garden (Book)' (New York: Vintage Books, 1999)

Claire Ratinon & Sam Ayre, 'Horticultural Appropriation' (London: Rough Trade Books x Garden Museum, 2021)

Sathnam Sanghera, 'Empireland: How Imperialism Has Shaped Modern Britain' (London: Viking, 2021)

'The Coloniality of Planting with Ros Gray & Shela Sheikh', The Botanical Mind, (Camden Art Centre podcast, 2020)

Other resources

Colonial Countryside is a child-led writing and history project exploring the African, Caribbean and Indian connections at 11 National Trust properties.

Incredible Edible Lambeth supports food growers and a more localised food economy across Lambeth. It provides walking trails, highlighting community gardens and green spaces across the borough: incredibleediblelambeth.org

Tree Talk maps the trees of London and allows you to identify the trees in your area: treetalk.co.uk

Follow on Instagram

@blak_outside

@decolonisethegarden

@landinournames

@queerbotany

@wretchedoftheearth

@urbancanopyuk

Credits

Text: Sasha Morse

Illustration: Emily Rand

Photographs: London Borough of Lambeth Archives Department

Thanks to Professor Corinne Fowler author of 'Green Unpleasant Land: Creative Responses to Rural England's Colonial Connections', and Kerstin Doble.

This map responds to, and expands on, 'Things Held Fast', a new public commission at Brixton Underground station by Australian artist Helen Johnson. On view 20 May–November 2021, Johnson's large-scale painting depicts Brixton through the lens of a community garden and as a shared space of growth.



1 Windrush Square Plant Hunters

The large tree in Windrush Square is known as the 'Tate Plane'. It is a London plane tree and was planted when a memorial garden was created for English sugar merchant and philanthropist, Sir Henry Tate in 1905.

The London plane is the city's most common tree. It is thought to have been first cultivated from the seeds of an 'oriental' plane and an American sycamore by **John Tradescant** (c.1570–1638) in Lambeth in the 1600s. Tradescant and his son, also named John (1608–1662), were influential gardeners in 17th century England. They owned a large garden near Vauxhall where they grew a wide variety of plants, many of which were collected on expeditions across the globe, including on slave ships to England's earliest American colony, Virginia.

Travelling naturalists such as the Tradescants became known as 'plant hunters' and transplanted horticultural specimens across the globe. In the process they tapped vast reserves of indigenous knowledge and altered entire ecosystems.

The name of the two trees from which the London plane was born reflect this colonial heritage. Though the tree is named after the city in which it has flourished, its origins in Asia and America have been forgotten.

What else to see

Brixton Tate Library

Built by Sir Henry Tate for the people of Brixton, now run by Lambeth Council.

Black Cultural Archives

A national institution dedicated to the histories of people of African and Caribbean descent in Britain.

Cherry Grove Memorial Pavilion

Cherry 'Dorothy' Grove was a Jamaican mother who was shot by the Metropolitan Police in her home in 1985. The shooting left Cherry paralysed and sparked the Brixton uprising. Grove tragically passed away from her injuries in 2011. A memorial, designed by architect Sir David Adjaye, pays tribute to her life and the Brixton community.

2 St Matthew's Gardens Colonial Collecting

St Matthew's Gardens is home to horse chestnut, sycamore and plane trees (among others) which were introduced to English soil in Lambeth by the Tradescants in the 17th century.

The Tradescants were prolific collectors of plants and other items of natural history and **ethnography**. Plants and objects that were bought, collected or looted on colonial expeditions or during war helped to establish the botanical institutions and museums we know today.

'Exotic' plants from colonial landscapes came to symbolise wealth and sophistication. Specimens were collected during plant hunting expeditions and their extraction and transportation was both directly and indirectly linked to transatlantic slavery. Africans carried seeds on slave-ships to the Americas. Botanical gardens

Today, breadfruit is sold in Brixton market less than three miles from Bligh's grave in the St Mary-at-Lambeth churchyard. Breadfruit symbolises exploitation and resilience. It is a reminder of the links between botany and the slave-trade. It's presence also traces the intercontinental journeys of Banks and Bligh to Tahiti, Africans to the Caribbean and, hundreds of years later, Caribbean people to Britain.

Get involved

Urban Growth help communities build garden and food growing spaces. They run volunteering schemes, free events and workshops at Brixton Orchard: urbangrowth.london

5 Windmill Gardens Legacies in the present

The Brixton Windmill is a relic of Brixton's rural past. It once stood among cornfields but as London expanded it became surrounded by houses. London's green spaces have changed over hundreds of years.

Our access to green space is influenced by local histories of landownership as well as by the privilege our ancestors were born into or the adversity they faced in their lifetime.

The Coronavirus pandemic has highlighted issues of landownership and unequal access to land. In England 1% of the population currently owns 50% of the land. The Office for National Statistics shows that one in eight British households have no garden. In addition, Black Britons are nearly four times as likely as white people to lack access to outdoor space at home.

Our gardens and green spaces may not seem obvious places to reflect on the outcomes of British colonialism. However, botany was integral to colonial commerce. People with colonial wealth were also able to buy land in Britain, which was inherited by subsequent generations.

Community gardening and food growing initiatives are working to reclaim London's green spaces. See a list of local initiatives you can get involved with at the bottom of each section and on the reverse.

Get involved

Friends of Windmill Gardens is a community charity which runs a monthly gardening group, a community planting garden, education workshops, guided walks and tours of the windmill: brixtonwindmill.org

6 Brockwell Park Walled Garden Commerce, Wealth and Influence

Directions: Look out for the temple folly at the centre of the park, and you'll find the entrance to the garden beside it.

The walled garden in Brockwell Park is a historic kitchen garden. It was originally laid out when Brockwell Hall was a private residence. It features rose beds, perennial flowers and wisterias. The **wisteria** was brought to England in 1812 by John Reeve, an East India Company tea inspector who was employed by Sir Joseph Banks to gather plant specimens for Kew Gardens. The East India Company had its own armies to conquer and control territories in South and East Asia and plant collectors used East India Company ships and networks.



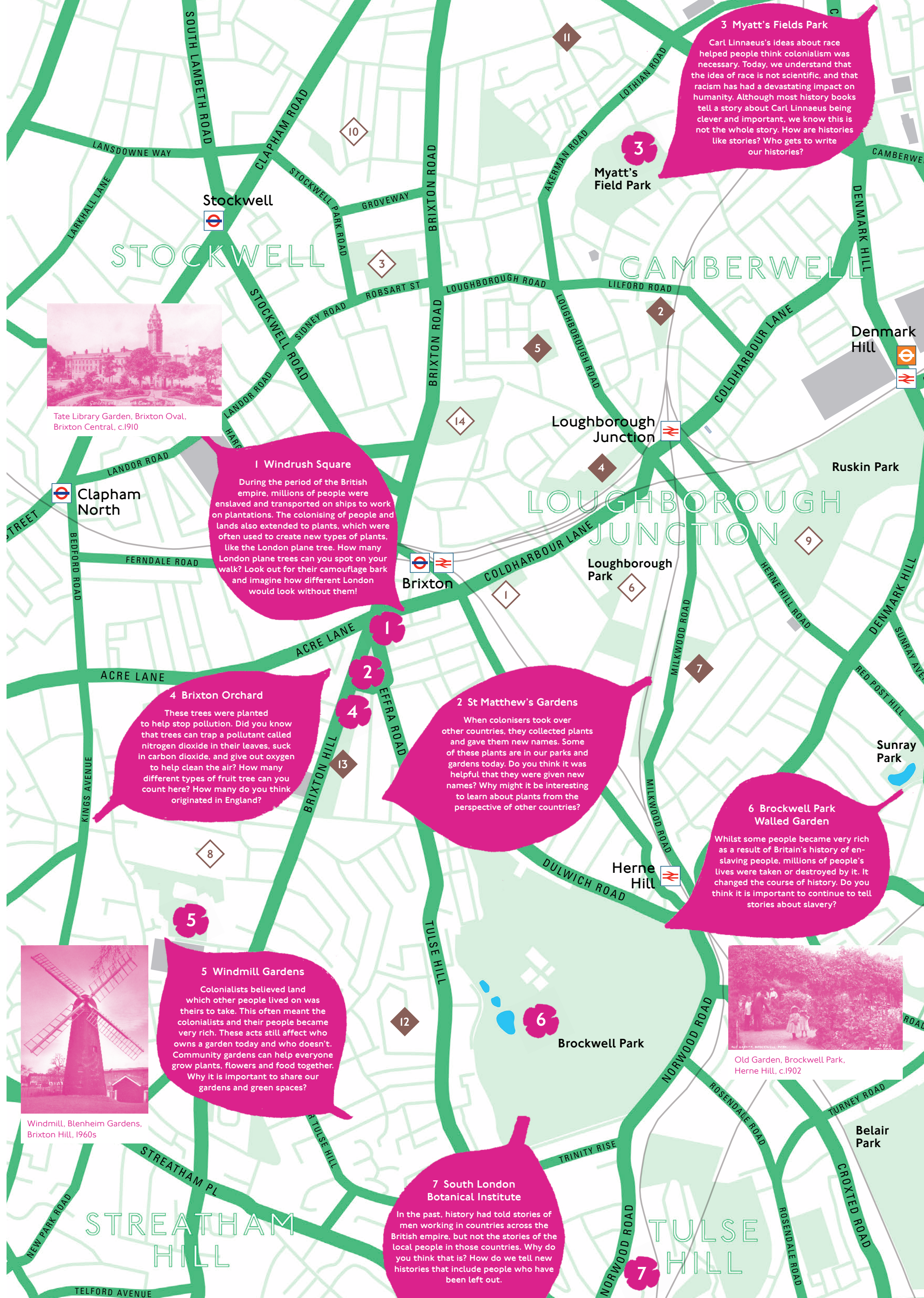
Tate Library Garden, Brixton Oval, Brixton Central, c.1910



Windmill, Blenheim Gardens, Brixton Hill, 1960s



Old Garden, Brockwell Park, Herne Hill, c.1902



1 Windrush Square

During the period of the British empire, millions of people were enslaved and transported on ships to work on plantations. The colonising of people and lands also extended to plants, which were often used to create new types of plants, like the London plane tree. How many London plane trees can you spot on your walk? Look out for their camouflage bark and imagine how different London would look without them!

4 Brixton Orchard

These trees were planted to help stop pollution. Did you know that trees can trap a pollutant called nitrogen dioxide in their leaves, suck in carbon dioxide, and give out oxygen to help clean the air? How many different types of fruit tree can you count here? How many do you think originated in England?

2 St Matthew's Gardens

When colonisers took over other countries, they collected plants and gave them new names. Some of these plants are in our parks and gardens today. Do you think it was helpful that they were given new names? Why might it be interesting to learn about plants from the perspective of other countries?

5 Windmill Gardens

Colonialists believed land which other people lived on was theirs to take. This often meant the colonialists and their people became very rich. These acts still affect who owns a garden today and who doesn't. Community gardens can help everyone grow plants, flowers and food together. Why it is important to share our gardens and green spaces?

7 South London Botanical Institute

In the past, history had told stories of men working in countries across the British empire, but not the stories of the local people in those countries. Why do you think that is? How do we tell new histories that include people who have been left out.

3 Myatt's Fields Park

Carl Linnaeus's ideas about race helped people think colonialism was necessary. Today, we understand that the idea of race is not scientific, and that racism has had a devastating impact on humanity. Although most history books tell a story about Carl Linnaeus being clever and important, we know this is not the whole story. How are histories like stories? Who gets to write our histories?

6 Brockwell Park Walled Garden

Whilst some people became very rich as a result of Britain's history of enslaving people, millions of people's lives were taken or destroyed by it. It changed the course of history. Do you think it is important to continue to tell stories about slavery?

were established in the Caribbean by plantation owners who commissioned plant hunters to send specimens back to Britain. Plants became an important aspect of colonial commerce.

The use of colonial terminology to describe 'exotic' plants is ongoing. Many common plant names reflected racist slurs and the way we still talk about 'native' and 'invasive' species parallels human histories of conquest. Plants' classification also mirrored the empire's classification of human beings, promoting an ideology of **otherness** that persists today.

3 Myatt's Fields Park Naming

Myatt's Fields Park is named after Joseph Myatt (1771–1855), a tenant market gardener who became famous for growing award-winning strawberries and rhubarb on the land in the 19th century.

Sugar had become increasingly cheap because plantations were worked by enslaved people. As it became more accessible in Britain, and grew in popularity, so did Myatt's produce. Sugarcane is perhaps the most well-known example of a plant being exploited by humans to change global ecologies and human history.

Myatt named one of his rhubarb varieties after the Swedish botanist, Carl Linnaeus. Linnaeus and his taxonomies of the natural world, including humans were central to developing colonial racism.

He separated people into categories based on the colour of their skin and their perceived temperaments. This promoted the ideology of race and formed

The land on which Brockwell Park sits today has connections with the transatlantic slave trade. It once belonged to the Tulse family. Sir Henry Tulse served on the committee of a prolific slave trading company, the Royal African Company, and was Mayor of London 1683–1684. Tulse Hill is named after him.

In the 1850s, William Augustus Parker (1802–1875), lived in a house in Brockwell Park. In 1835 Parker received the equivalent of half million pounds in today's money, as compensation for 88 liberated enslaved people on plantations in British Guiana. This was part of the government's **post abolition compensation scheme** which financially compensated British slave-owners.

Get involved
Brockwell Park Community Greenhouses run a volunteer gardening scheme, nature-based play and learning sessions for children, training and therapeutic workshops and community events with food and music. brockwellgreenhouses.org.uk

Index

-  Main sites
-  Kid's trail
-  Additional green spaces
-  Community run gardens

the foundational justification for colonial dominance. It also demonstrates how the theories of individual men, in the name of science, have changed the course of history.

Get involved

Myatt's Fields Park Projects is a community food hub, and an edible park supporting local families and working with the local community with the aim of creating sustainable change. They run community food activities, a volunteer gardening scheme and offer thousands of free edible plants to local growing projects: myattsfieldspark.info

4 Brixton Orchard Colonial Planting

The Brixton Orchard was planted to help reduce pollution in this busy part of London. Food has been grown in Brixton for centuries.

Sir Joseph Banks (1743–1820) was a botanist who founded Kew Gardens. He was also an advocate of the slave trade. In 1787, he appointed **Captain William Bligh** (1754–1817), who lived in Lambeth, to lead a mission to transplant **breadfruit** trees from Tahiti to the Caribbean. Banks identified breadfruit as a cheap and nutritious food for feeding enslaved people on British-owned sugar plantations.

Breadfruit arrived in the Caribbean in 1793 and became a key ingredient in local cuisine. It arrived in post-war Britain with the Windrush generation, Caribbean people who were invited to Britain to alleviate labour shortages. Many Caribbean people settled in Brixton.

7 South London Botanical Institute Colonial Discovery

The South London Botanical Institute (SLBI) is a botanical garden, **herbarium** and library opened by Allan Octavian Hume (1829–1912) in 1910 to encourage anyone with an interest in botany, ecology and conservation.

Hume was a botanist, ornithologist and colonial administrator in India during the 19th century. He has been presented as radical in his time as an advocate for Indian people in a time of resounding support for colonial rule. He is remembered as the 'Father of Indian Ornithology' and for his plant and bird 'discoveries'.

Colonial narratives often described how Europeans 'discovered' continents, animals and plants and became 'fathers' of certain research fields. This denies that indigenous people had a deep knowledge of these lands, plants and animals long before colonial conquest, and which plant hunters and botanical institutes later came to rely on. In Hume's case, he made numerous references in his writing to knowledgeable Indian naturalists who helped him. Despite this, Hume ultimately worked as a colonial administrator and his name alone endures.

Get involved

The SLBI run open garden days, botanical education talks and schools' workshops. They open for specific events, are free to visit and open to the public on Thursday (10–4pm) and by appointment: slbi.org.uk

Glossary

* One of the ways colonial legacies are perpetuated in horticulture is through language. As colonial language is increasingly interrogated in literature and culture, we rarely question its influence on our names for plants. In this map, where horticultural names which use words that are now considered outdated and offensive are referenced, they are done so in quote marks. This attempts to query their common use in horticultural literature.

British empire

Multiple lands which were under the rule of the British crown. The map refers to empire in lowercase as an anti-colonial act.

'Oriental' *

An outdated and derogatory term to describe people or objects from or characteristic of Asia.



John Tradescant the Elder and Younger

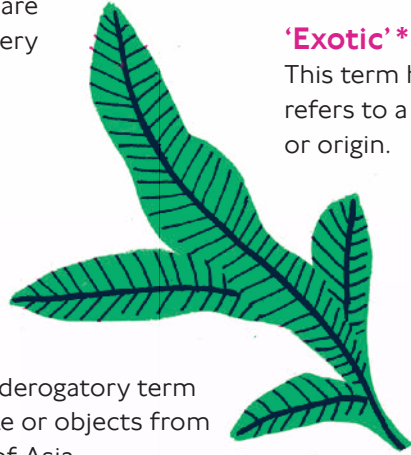
Father and son gardeners and collectors who are buried in a family tomb in the graveyard of St Mary-at-Lambeth, now the Garden Museum.

Captain William Bligh

An officer in the Royal Navy and a colonial agent. In 1806, on Sir Joseph Banks's recommendation, Bligh was made Governor of the colony of New South Wales (Australia) where he subjugated the First Nation People. He is buried in a tomb next to the Tradescant family in St Mary's churchyard.

'Exotic' *

This term has colonial connotations and refers to a mysteriously foreign quality or origin.



Othering

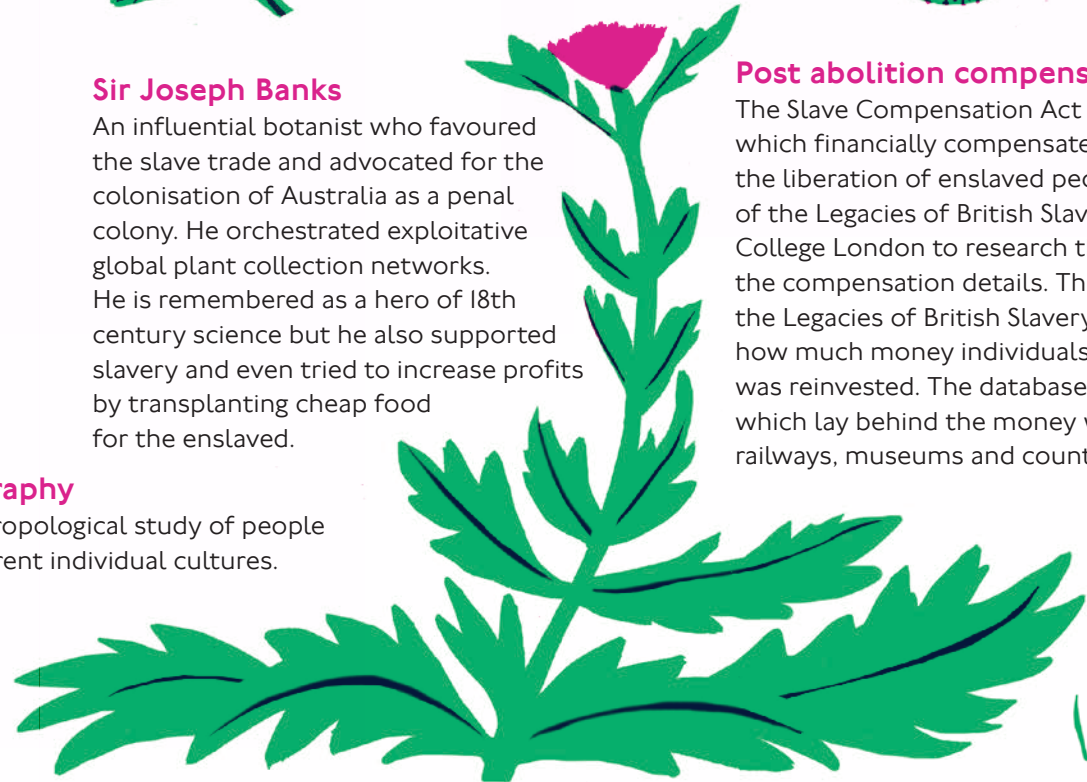
A way of describing a person or group of people as different or strange. In terms of colonialism, othering was a process where white colonisers emphasised their difference from indigenous people as a way of asserting control.

Sir Joseph Banks

An influential botanist who favoured the slave trade and advocated for the colonisation of Australia as a penal colony. He orchestrated exploitative global plant collection networks. He is remembered as a hero of 18th century science but he also supported slavery and even tried to increase profits by transplanting cheap food for the enslaved.

Ethnography

The anthropological study of people and different individual cultures.

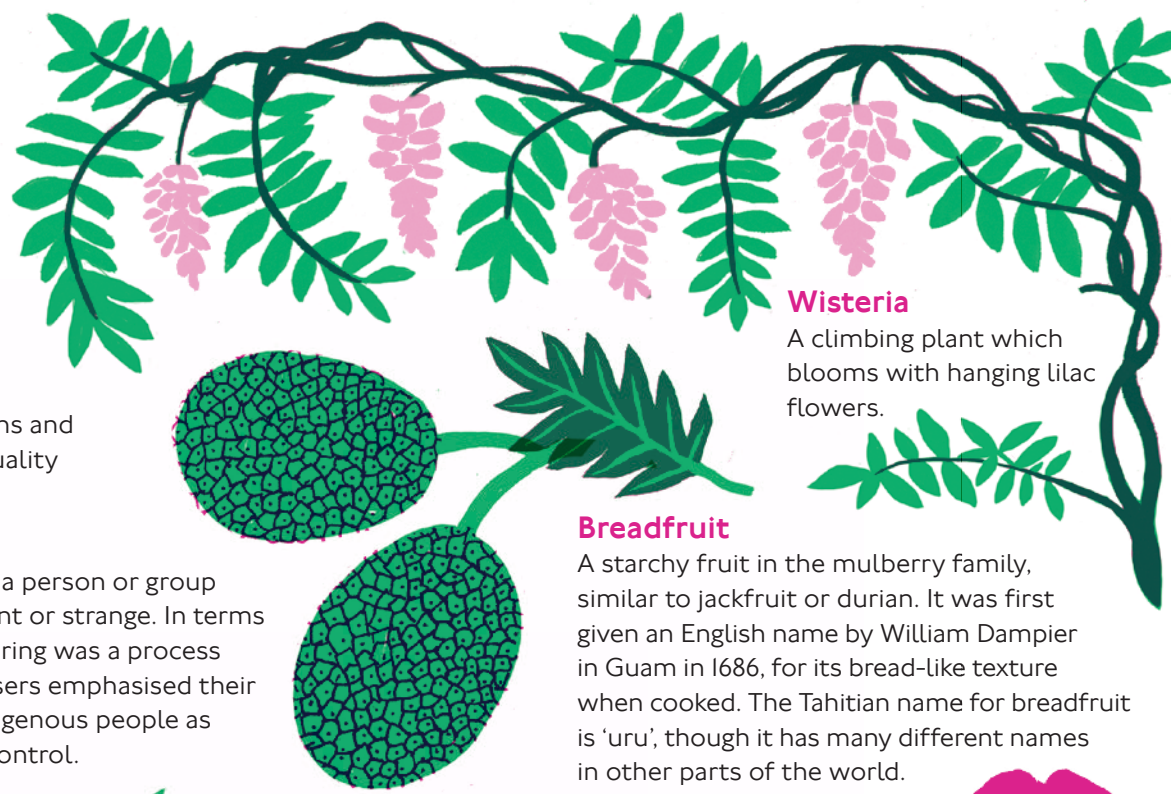


Post abolition compensation scheme

The Slave Compensation Act 1837 was an Act of Parliament which financially compensated British slave-owners following the liberation of enslaved people. The Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery was set up by University College London to research the impact of the Act and study the compensation details. The research is accessible through the Legacies of British Slavery databases where searches reveal how much money individuals received and where that money was reinvested. The database exposes the brutal violence which lay behind the money which funded some of Britain's railways, museums and country houses.

Herbarium

A collection of dried plants which are catalogued and categorised and often mounted on card and stored in airtight cabinets.



Wisteria

A climbing plant which blooms with hanging lilac flowers.

Breadfruit

A starchy fruit in the mulberry family, similar to jackfruit or durian. It was first given an English name by William Dampier in Guam in 1686, for its bread-like texture when cooked. The Tahitian name for breadfruit is 'uru', though it has many different names in other parts of the world.



Other local green spaces and community run gardens

- 1 Coldharbour Gardens
- 2 Elam Street Open Space
- 3 Slade Gardens (community garden and edible playground)
- 4 Wyck Gardens
- 5 Dora Boatemah Memorial Garden (Named after Theodora 'Dora' Boatemah MBE, a British Ghanaian community leader, activist and founder of the Angell Town Community Project which regenerated the Angell Town Estate in the eighties)
- 6 Loughborough Park Community Garden
- 7 Milkwood Community Park
- 8 Blenheim Estate Community Garden
- 9 Ruskin Park Community Garden
- 10 Van Gogh Walk (community run public garden space)
- 11 Dan Leno Gardens (specifically designed for people with disabilities)
- 12 Harmony Gardens Tulse Hill
- 13 Rush Common
- 14 Max Roach Park (Loughborough Community Centre run a gardening club)

Please note: opening times and availability vary. Search individual organisations for more details.