

December 8, 2023-April 20, 2024



Lloyd Library & Museum

917 Plum St
Cincinnati, OH 45202

A detailed botanical illustration serves as the background for the text. It features a variety of plants: a large green leaf with pinkish-red variegation in the top left; a cluster of pink and yellow flowers in the top center; a long, dark, patterned flower on the right; a yellow flower with a red center on the right; a green stem with small yellow flowers on the right; a cluster of purple flowers on the left; a large red flower in the bottom left; and a large purple flower in the bottom right.

Flowers are undoubtedly the stars of the botanical firmament. We are lured by their beauty and cured by their power. Botanical illustrations capture and radiate this power. And the bolder they are, the more ecstatic our response. By engaging with their dynamic colors, sinuous lines, and sublime compositions, we commune with a human enthusiasm for art and nature that transcends language, location, and time.

The type of book known as a flora is an inventory of a region's plant life. Floras also invariably catalog the environment, aesthetics, and values of their time. Indeed, books in this exhibition record plants never seen before and never seen again.

The quests for exotic and esoteric specimens captured in these books reflect imperialist ambitions and values both honorable and shameful. Even the most principled and pragmatic floras express, however implicitly, significant imbalances of power.

These books are affirming expressions of collective work driven by shared passions. Though some title pages and dedications might try to mislead you, there is never one true hero. They are collaborations among authors, researchers, specimen collectors, draftsmen, engravers, colorists, and sponsors—those named and not. Here we view floras through a cooperative lens to better understand how these spectacular works came to be.

This exhibition doubles down on the floral fireworks to elicit your oohs and aahs. We also hope it motivates you to build upon the most noble aspects of floras: creating and sustaining natural beauty and modeling human respect for nature.

A word of warning, though: by engaging with 400 years of botanical exuberance, you might just develop flora mania.

Pietro Andrea Mattioli (1501-1577)

Kreutterbuch

Frankfurt, 1600

This is the oldest book in the exhibition. It is exceptional for the quality of continuous and meticulously colored plates. This is scarce for books of this type and age.



This a German edition of Mattioli's commentaries on Dioscorides's 1st century CE *De materia medica*. It was one of the most comprehensive and popular herbals of its time. Mattioli extended the field of botany by including plants of no known therapeutic value. Several flowers are described here for the first time, including several African species. It contains a staggering 1000 woodcuts, mostly colored, based on designs of Conrad Gessner but reworked by Camerarius. Mattioli was the physician of Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian II. The marketplace dominance of the book was in part due to Mattioli's unscrupulous treatment of his rivals and critics, many of whom he had censured or pursued by the Inquisition.

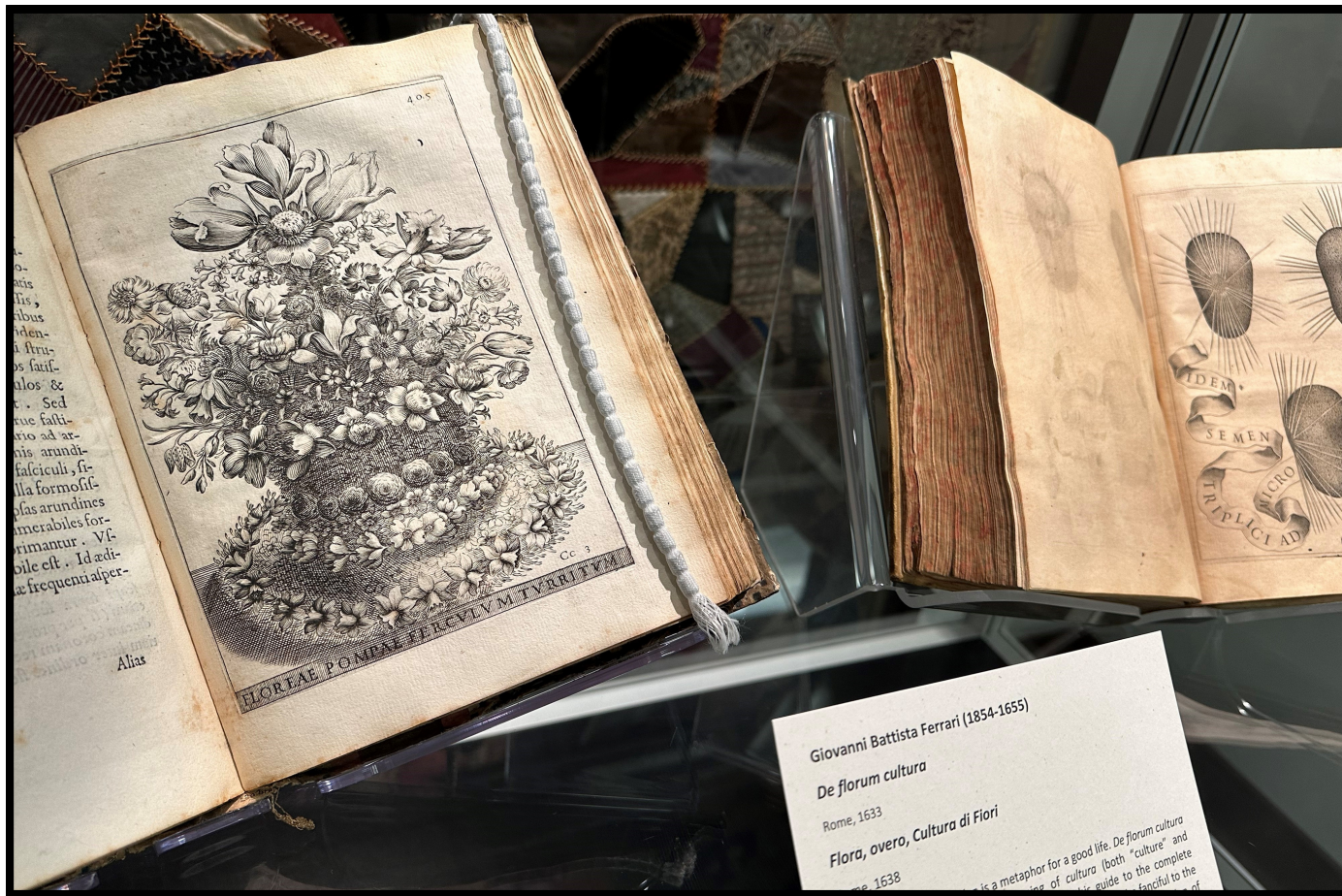
Giovanni Battista Ferrari (1554-1655)

De florum cultura

Rome, 1633

Flora, ovvero, Cultura di Fiori

Rome, 1638



There are only three black and white Illustrations in the exhibition. These are two.



John Sibthorp (1758-1796)

Flora Graeca

London, 1806-1840

10 volumes

This landmark scientific and artistic achievement is one of the rarest and most expensive floras ever produced. It is a comprehensive account of eastern Mediterranean plant life. Sibthorp's goal was to assign Linnaean names to plants discussed in Dioscorides's *De materia medica*. Sibthorp identified 300 previously unknown species. Ferdinand Bauer made coded pencil sketches recording colors of specimens onsite which allowed him to exactly paint the works in watercolor back in England. The 966 hand-colored engravings in the book are by James Sowerby and his family, based on Bauer's work. The Lloyd's copy is one of only twenty-five first editions, each produced at the cost of £620—about \$46,000 in today's dollars.

In 1912, political uncertainties in Europe prompted Lloyd Library co-founder Curtis Gates Lloyd to move from Paris to London, where he took an office at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. The onset of WWI prompted him to leave London for the US where he stayed until 1922. During this time, he got word that a London antiquarian book dealer named Quaritch was offering the *Flora Graeca* for £240, a notably low price for the already legendary book. Lloyd realized that he had to move quickly as he "had always been willing to pay a thousand dollars for a copy." In a letter dated October 2, 1920, Lloyd's contact in London, Kew curator Sidney Alfred Skan, informed him that he had secured the book. It officially entered the Lloyd collection in 1921.

Christoph Jacob Trew (1695-1769), illustrations by Georg Dionysius Ehret (1708-1770)

Plantae Selectae

Augsburg, 1750-1773



Often called Germany's greatest botanical, *Plantae Selectae* also has strong British roots. The flora was conceived in 1742 when Trew, a wealthy German physician, bibliophile, and amateur botanist, made plans to compile into one volume his collection of drawings by Ehret, a fellow German. Trew sponsored botanical illustrators including Ehret and Elizabeth Blackwell to create works based on plants in Chelsea Physic Garden, London's oldest botanic garden. In fact, Ehret and Blackwell were working there simultaneously while under the patronage of Trew.

The superlatives for *Plantae Selectae* stem from the dazzling hand-colored illustrations by the self-taught Ehret. His floral designs were used on the celebrated porcelain of Chelsea and Tournai, and his original artworks are in the collections of the Victoria & Albert Museum, Knowsley Hall, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. He became director of the Oxford Botanic Garden in 1750. Like Blackwell, Ehret was heralded by eminent biologist and collaborator Linnaeus, who in a letter to Trew wrote, "The miracles of our century in the natural sciences [include] your work of Ehret's plants ... nothing to equal [it] was seen in the past or will be in the future."

Elizabeth Blackwell (1699-1758)

Herbarium Blackwellianum emendatum et auctum

Nuremberg, 1750-1773



Herbarium Blackwellianum is the expanded German edition of Blackwell's *A Curious Herbal*, an illustrated compendium of medical plants originally printed in London in 1737-1739, which is also in the Lloyd's collection. She and fellow botanical illustrator Georg Dionysius Ehret were simultaneously working in London's Chelsea Physic Garden under the patronage of Christoph Jacob Trew.

A Curious Herbal became a standard resource for physicians and apothecaries. However, its existence was hard-won. When Blackwell's husband declared bankruptcy, she turned her illustration work into a one-woman design company. She etched plates, hand-colored printed illustrations, and marketed the book herself. Her work shows the conventions of Enlightenment-era botanical illustration: parts of plants are identified and shown in various stages of the lifecycle and in cross-section. She used the newly established nomenclature of Linnaeus, who nicknamed her "Botanica Blackwellia." New research has revealed that she likely had more agency in her affairs than previously accredited to her. *A Curious Herbal* and its subsequent editions stand as an artistic triumph and an expression of a modern woman's unrelenting spirit and determination.

Flora Mania Artwork

The flower illustrations on these posters, and all *Flora Mania* promotional materials, are from hand-colored-lithographs by Walter Hood Fitch in William Jackson Hooker's *Exotic Flora*, located in the case below. Pictured to the left in the case.

Sir William Jackson Hooker (1785-1865); illustrated by Walter Hood Fitch (1817-1892)

Exotic Flora

Edinburgh, 1823-1827

When the first volume of *Exotic Flora* was published in 1823, University of Glasgow professor Hooker had already written and illustrated four books and had a weevil named in his honor. Hooker was so knowledgeable of the therapeutic qualities of plants that his botany course was required for all Glasgow medical students. In 1826 he became editor of Curtis's *Botanical Magazine*, and in 1841 he was appointed the first full-time director of Kew Gardens. Under his leadership, Kew consulted the British Foreign Office on all matters related to flora, forestry, and natural products.



Joseph Dalton Hooker (1817-1911);
illustrated by Walter Hood Fitch
(1817-1892)

Illustrations of Himalayan Plants

London, 1855

Illustrations of Himalayan Plants exemplifies Joseph Dalton Hooker's geographically contextualized vision of botany. It is one of three books he wrote about a Himalayan expedition that yielded over 7,000 specimens. The book is not without imperialist associations. Hooker explains that Fitch corrected "the stiffness and want of botanical knowledge displayed by the native artists who executed most of the originals." Initial drawings for the book are attributed James F. Cathcart, a "quintessential colonial master at the outer regions of the empire," who directed a corps of Indian collectors to climb up to 8,000 feet to bring back flowers to a team of unnamed Indian artists working in his house.



This case starts with an image of the goddess of all flowering plants.

Much of the artwork in these cases are by women including Charlotte Sowerby, Augusta Whithers and Mary Vaux Walcott.

The books on the bottom shelf are illustrated by Pierre-Joseph Redoute.

Redouté was an official court artist of Marie Antoinette. He maintained his royal affiliations through the French Revolution while many of his Royalist colleagues were imprisoned or worse. Redouté revolutionized stippling, an engraving technique using dots and flicks that allows for tonal variations that heighten the drama of his flowers' sinuous lines and dynamic colors. Art critic John Ruskin admired the book and wrote his bookseller to "please at once set your Paris agents to look out for all copies ... and buy all they can get."





Brilliantly illustrated books contributed by various renowned botanists throughout the 19th century.

These include: Robert Sweet, John Lindley, Friedrich Berge, Joseph Paxton, and Leopold Trattinnick.



Curtis's Botanical Magazine

London and Oxford, 1787-present

Curtis's is the longest running botanical magazine. The Lloyd proudly has a complete run from 1787 through 2023. Its exquisite images were hand-colored through 1948. Founder William Curtis was head of Chelsea Physic Garden. William Jackson Hooker became editor in 1826, selecting Walter Hood Fitch as lead artist. Hooker and Fitch were then the juggernaut of British botany, both working for Kew Gardens and the magazine. When a critic mocked it as a "drawing book for ladies," Hooker added plant dissections to plates. The list of artists whose work has appeared in the magazine is a multi-century who's who of botanical illustration including James Sowerby, Sydenham Edwards, Matilda Smith, Augusta Innes Withers, Anne Henslow Barnard, Lilian Snelling, and Stella Ross-Craig.

The Botanical Register

London, 1815-1847

The Botanical Register was founded by Sydenham Edwards who left his post as illustrator of Curtis's Botanical Magazine after an editorial dispute. In its first five years, Edwards himself provided the original watercolors that were then engraved and hand-colored by others. Floral images on Spode pottery were inspired by illustrations that appeared in the magazine. Later editor John Lindley, inspired by Antoine Laurent de Jussieu, made sure to include dissections alongside floral paintings years before Curtis's followed suit. It demonstrates a departure from Linnaean classification, which relies on depicting parts of the flower without details of its structure. The De Jussieu system remains in use today.

These periodicals sprang from sources like botanical clubs and societies or as the in-house publications of botanical gardens including the world-famous Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and Berlin's Botanic Garden and Botanical Museum. To bring their contents to life, botanical journals used the techniques available at the time to visually depict plants and their parts. Prior to the 1860s, this largely required hand coloring of engravings, but advances in the use of chromolithography allowed for the mass production of accurate color illustrations. However, the art of botanical illustration by hand is far from extinct, as seen in several of our current periodicals. Two title of note described to the left.



This case features beautiful, floral publishers' bindings, seed catalogs.

The apothecary jar on the top shelf is adorned with floral imagery inspired by illustrated botanical books in the Lloyd's collection. It was made by Lloyd Library's 2019 Artists-in-Residence, Future Retrieval.

On the third shelf down:

Johann Hieronymus Kniphof (1704-1763)

Botanica in originali seu herbarium vivum

Halle, Germany, 1758-1764

The 1,200 illustrations in Kniphof's book remain striking today because his commitment to the method of "nature-printing" was philosophical. It allows plants to speak directly to the viewer with little human intervention. His innovation was to make an impression of a specimen coated in printer's ink, rather than the more common lampblack ink, and to use a flat printing press. Impressions were also colored by hand, "according to nature." It is also one of the first books to use Linnaean nomenclature.

Irene Gosse (born 1897/1898); illustrations by Gertrude Hermes (1901-1983)

A Florilege: Chosen from the Old Herbals

Chelsea, 1931

The mesmerizing hatching and crosshatching of Hermes's illustrations in *A Florilege* confirm her status as one of the 20th century's finest wood engravers.

Flora Mania Talking Points

SUMMARY

Floras—books that inventory a region’s plant life—are snapshots of an era’s values, aesthetics, and approach to the environment. **Flora Mania flaunts the Lloyd Library’s liveliest botanical book illustrations, focusing on works from the golden age of floras (18th-19th centuries), their predecessors, and heirs.** The exhibition spotlights bold aesthetics but also puts them into context, presenting a range of expressions regarding imperialism, the environment, and the cooperative nature of creating floras.

KEY POINTS

- By centering the boldest botanicals, we reinforce the fact that **exuberant response to beautiful flower illustration is universal**—it transcends language, location, and time.
- **The golden age of floras is simultaneous to the height of colonialism.** Many of the greatest floras express imperialist ambitions and values, both honorable and shameful.
- **Flora Mania highlights the contributions to floras by individuals from historically marginalized communities**, including female illustrators and indigenous illustrators and specimen collectors.
- **Floras capture images and descriptions of never-before-seen and now-extinct flowers.**

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Centerpiece works:** *Flora Graeca*, *Plantae Selectae*, *Herbarium Blackwellianum*
 - **Flora Graeca** (1806-1840): Oxford calls it the most splendid flora ever produced; one of rarest, most expensive floras ever: only 25 copies printed (the Lloyd has one!); produced at the cost of \$46,000 in today’s dollars.
 - **Plantae Selectae** (1750-1773): Often called Germany’s greatest botanical book; Ehret is one of the most celebrated botanical illustrators ever; Ehret and Elizabeth Blackwell were simultaneously working in Chelsea Physic Garden under the same patron.
 - **Herbarium Blackwellianum** (1750-1773): Rare female author, Elizabeth Blackwell; due to her husband’s bankruptcy, she turned her illustration job into a one-woman design firm: she drew, engraved, colored, and marketed the book.
- *Illustrations of Himalayan Plants* (1855). J.D. Hooker pioneers “geographical botany” in this, the fruit of an expedition that yielded 7,000 specimens, which is also critical of native contributions.
- Two books illustrated by Pierre-Joseph Redouté: Redouté, one of the greatest botanical artists of all time, was patronized by Marie Antoinette and Empress Josephine, Napoleon’s wife.
- **Strong female presence:** in addition to Blackwell, who’s in the cube, the left tall case features:
 - *The Illustrated Bouquet* (1857-1864): Most illustrations are by Charlotte Sowerby (granddaughter of J. Sowerby, illustrator of *Flora Graeca*) and Augusta Innes Withers.
 - Elizabeth Yonge’s *The Instructive Picture Book* (1858) is the only book in the show aimed at young readers; she was a famous novelist who inspired the Pre-Raphaelites.
 - Mary Vaux Walcott’s *North American Wild Flowers* (1925) preserves *Franklinia*, a flowering tree extinct in the wild.
- **Oldest work:** Mattioli’s *Kreutterbuch* (1600)
- **Newest work:** Future Retrieval’s floral vase (2019) (F.R. was Lloyd artist-in-residence in 2019.)
- The illustrations on all *Flora Mania* promotional materials are taken from William Jackson Hooker’s *Exotic Flora*, located in the case under the windows at the left.
- One patron said, “this exhibit warmed me up on the coldest day of the year!”