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The People in Your Garden: Lady Banks

by Lydia Holley

The Lady Banks rose (*Rosa Banksiae*) was named for Lady Dorothea Banks, the wife of Sir Joseph Banks. It is important to note that, Sir Joseph has not only an entire genus named for him (*Banksia*, in the *Proteaceae* family), but also land masses. The famous explorer James Cook named Banks Peninsula, a part of New Zealand, after Sir Joseph, and the infamous Captain William Bligh named Banks Islands for him.



Lady Banks was the hostess to many of Sir Joseph's scientific and explorer friends. She was known as a cheerful woman, with a sweet nature. Her sister-in-law, Sophie Banks, made her home with Sir Joseph and Lady Banks. There were no children in the household, and from all accounts, the three got along quite harmoniously.

Lady Banks rose comes from China, and Sir Joseph was the Director of Kew Gardens at the time it was named. It must be exciting to have a rose named after you, and I am certain it pleased Lady Banks immensely. There are reports of her showing off a Lady Banks rose planted in her personal garden to friends and acquaintances. Wouldn't it be fun to say "Come see my rose" and mean, "Come see the rose named after me"?

Their garden was home to numerous plants from the travels of previous plant explorations. There were several greenhouses to provide the protection needed for the tropical plants that were being discovered at that time, many by Sir Joseph himself. The garden was reportedly not only interesting, but beautiful as well.

Lady Banks rose has a white blooming form, 'Alba Plena', and a yellow blooming form, 'Lutea' both of which are thornless. Lady Banks rose only blooms in the spring, but is quite a beautiful sight when in bloom. It is an aggressive climber, but it is also evergreen, and can be trained to cover an arbor or even an entire pergola to make a lovely sitting area. It would be fitting to think of sweet Lady Banks as you pour your afternoon tea under the shade of the rose named for her.

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