



Book Review by Margaret Hodgson

Seeds of Adventure by Peter Cox and Peter Hutchison
 Garden Art Press, The Antique Collectors' Club, Suffolk, England, copyright 2008. \$53.98 Cdn.
 415 pages, approx. 700 colour photos, and four pages of coloured maps outlining the various trips of the adventurers. Appendix of place names, glossary and bibliography is followed first by a plant index and then by a very good general index. Hardbound, ISBN 978-1-870673-58-7 (hardcover)

Peter Cox VMH was brought up with plant hunting in his blood and with its influences all around him. He is a world authority on rhododendrons, has run the famous Glendoick Nursery near Perth, Scotland, and with his son has written more books on rhododendrons than anyone else. These include *Encyclopedia of Rhododendron Species* and *Cox's Guide to Choosing Rhododendrons*. For his achievements in horticulture, Peter Cox has been awarded the

Victoria Medal of Honour, the Gold Medal of the American Rhododendron Society, The Nurseryman and Garden Centre Lifetime achievement award, awards from the Institute of Horticulture and Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society. In June 2005 he was awarded an honorary doctorate of Science from St Andrews University.

Peter Cox's early life was much influenced by his father, Euan H.M. Cox, a prominent botanist and famous plant collector in the early 1900s. Among his father's colleagues were such famous names as Joseph Rock, Frank Kingdom Ward and Reginald Farrer. Peter was also fortunate to have friends such as H.H. Davidian and Dr. John Cowan at the Royal Botanic Garden.

Sir Peter Hutchison is a keen gardener and plantsman who became the first Chairman of Trustees at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh and was later Chairman of the Forestry Commission. His particular enthusiasms are rare trees and primulas. Both Peters come from the East of Scotland but share a wild garden, Baravalla, in Argyll on the mild western coast where they grow plants they have collected. Peter Hutchison claims that although he did not grow up surrounded by the famous names of Peter Cox's background, his main influence in his path to a love of gardening and plant collecting came from growing up with a Victorian walled garden. The head gardener was a kindly man who was not in the least disturbed by having a small child tag along after him, watching him do everything in the greenhouses or the vast gardens. Also his mother was a keen gardener who passed on this enthusiasm to her son. She had a wide knowledge of plants and an instinctive eye for putting them together.

Seeds of Adventure tells the story of extensive travels made by Peter Cox and Peter Hutchison in search of hardy plants. They describe sixteen journeys – often arduous, sometimes dangerous and occasionally funny - that resulted in the collection of seeds from plants high in the peaks of the Himalaya, western China and Turkey. On many of these

trips they travelled to places so remote and rough that no western explorers had ever been before to botanise the plants.

The two Peters, as a result of their work, introduced many plants, especially rhododendrons, new or lost to cultivation, often saving them from extinction by growing seeds in the temperate climate Scotland following their trips and introducing their finds to Europe, New Zealand, Australia and Temperate zones of North America.

After their first trips in 1962 to Turkey and 1965 to India, they suffered a long gap before their next trip in 1981 to China because of many setbacks to their plans caused by political difficulties in so many countries during the intervening years. In 1967 they tried to get

back into North-east India without success, in 1973, no success for a trip to Bhutan. They received discouraging reports against going into Chile during the 1970s, nothing came of their attempts to get into Burma (Myanmar), but they never stopped planning, turning their focus towards China in 1978 and this came to fruition in 1981. From the year 1981, the trips quickly multiplied and they managed a total of sixteen trips, finally getting to Bhutan in 1988, Tibet in 1998 and Arunachal Pradesh in 2001. The last trip described is to Subansiri, India, 2002. The organization of the book basically follows one chapter to one trip. A very interesting book to read. The pictures are superior.