



PORT ARTHUR – AN EXOTIC GARDEN

Unlocking the Botanical Journey

Stately trees and scattered flowers bloom year after year in the gardens of Port Arthur. They are bright and tangible links to the convicts who dug the soil and planted the seeds and the men and women who treasured them as they grew 150 years ago.

All the artworks in this exhibition depict the culinary, medicinal and industrial stories of individual plants grown during the 1800s at Port Arthur. All were considered essential in some way for survival, providing food, medicine and timber for shelter and garden infrastructure. At the same time, many also represent a gentler aspect of life at the penal settlement to counterbalance the harshness and brutality of daily life in an isolated colonial prison.

A walk through the gardens today can lead us back to another time, revealing human stories with which we can all identify – loneliness and homesickness, the desire to create a haven of beauty in an otherwise harsh and unfamiliar environment and a driving passion to understand the natural world.

The artworks on display are presented by members of Botaniko, a small group of botanical artists living in and around Hobart. Many of its members have studied with one of Australia's leading botanical artists, Lauren Black.

Botaniko was first invited by the Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority to present an exhibition in 2015 portraying the plants of the 1800s in watercolour, pencil and mixed media on paper as well as with textiles. A further invitation to return to Port Arthur to portray the medicinal, culinary and industrial plants of the 1800s culminated in an exhibition at The Asylum at the Port Arthur Historic Site from January to March 2017.

