



# DAVID DOUGLAS



Born: 25<sup>th</sup> June 1799, Scotland

Died: 12<sup>th</sup> July 1834, Hawaii

David Douglas was a Scottish botanist, best known as the namesake of the Douglas-fir. He first worked as a gardener and explored the Scottish Highlands, North America and Hawaii.

## EARLY LIFE

David Douglas was born at Scone near Perth, Scotland, the son of a stone mason. After leaving Kinnoull School at the age of 11, he was employed as an apprentice gardener at Scone Palace, where he worked for seven years. In 1817, he moved to work in the gardens of Sir Robert Preston, at Valleyfield in Fife, where he was given access to Sir Robert's extensive botany library.

In 1823, Sir William Hooker recommended Douglas to the Royal Horticultural Society in London, who were looking for a suitable plant collector to send to the United States. Douglas spent the latter half of the year based in Philadelphia contacting other botanists and collecting plants.

## MAIN ACHIEVEMENT

Douglas travelled to the city of Vancouver, in Canada, in April 1825 to collect interesting tree specimens. Douglas's trip was a spectacular success, resulting in the introduction of some 240 new species to Britain including the Douglas-fir, Sitka Spruce, Western White Pine and Monterey Pine among very many others, plus flowers like the Lupin and the Penstemon. It is fair to say that the species introduced to Britain by Douglas transformed many British gardens: as well as the landscape more widely when his firs started to be used by the forestry industry.



Douglas Fir



Lupins

## A MYSTERIOUS DEATH

Douglas was still plant hunting when he died in mysterious circumstances in 1834. He was in Hawaii at the time and appeared to have fallen into a deep hole intended to catch bulls. Many believed he had been murdered by Englishman, Edward Gurney, as he had last been seen alive by his hit. Gurney was an escaped convict, and the purse of gold coins Douglas was known to be carrying was never found. Douglas was buried in Honolulu and in 1847 a memorial was erected in his memory in the churchyard of the Old Parish Church in Scone.

## FIND OUT MORE...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WApPnvdR-sU>



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EXAMPLE QUESTIONS:

1. Which country was David Douglas born in?
2. What was his job?
3. Which countries did Douglas travel to collect plants and seeds?
4. Which other trees did Douglas bring back to the UK?
5. Where is Douglas buried?