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*Forsythia*

*Oleaceae*

*Forsythia* commemorates a Scottish arboriculturist, William Forsyth (1737-1804), who was Chief Superintendent of the Royal Gardens at Kensington Palace and St. James's. He moved to London in 1763, succeeded his mentor Philip Miller, as curator at the Chelsea Physic Garden in 1771 and began his royal appointment as Chief Superintendent in 1784. In 1804 he was one of the seven core founder members of The Horticultural Society of London. All this however was to be overshadowed by the vociferous debate he attracted in the gardening world for the last 15 years of his life. His especial enthusiasm for fruit and forest trees began in the late 1770s and led to his interest in finding cures for the injuries and diseases to which they were prone. By 1789 his experiments had reached a point when he claimed miraculous benefits from the use of his special mixture 'Forsyth's plaister' for curing wounded fruit trees. It even created debate in the houses of parliament to the point that not only was Forsyth formally encouraged to inform the public about his findings and the lauded formula but was also awarded £15,000 by the government of the day for his achievements – but some historians note that the mixture was to be utterly discredited a few years after his death. He and his son, William, built up a much respected library which they appear to have made available to their peers and that access is believed to have contributed to several books on gardening history remarkable at that time which might not otherwise have been written. William Forsyth senior wrote various works himself including *Observations on the diseases, defects, and injuries of fruit and forest trees* (published in 1802 with Government pressure), and *Treatise on the Culture and Management of Fruit-Trees*.