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*Purshia*

*Rosaceae*

*Purshia* commemorates a German horticulturist, plant collector and writer, Frederick Pursh (1774-1820) who arrived in Baltimore (United States) in 1801 and moved to Philadelphia the following year. There he eventually met American botanists including Benjamin Smith Barton (1766-1815) who was to publish the first American botany textbook entitled *Elements of Botany*. Barton employed him as curator for his American plant herbarium project (eventually to be abandoned). For this Pursh not only collected plants himself but was also deputed by Barton to examine plant specimens received in 1805 from the celebrated explorer Meriwether Lewis via the then President, President Jefferson who had been enthused by the herbarium dream. In 1807 Pursh was directly employed by Lewis to prepare drawings and descriptions of his, Lewis's, specimens. He abandoned this in 1809 to the reported disgust of both Lewis and Barton and moved to London (England) two years later with some of their specimens and commissioned drawings as well as all his notes on the plants. There he not only worked for the Royal Botanic Garden but also, under the patronage of an English botanist and prominent plant collector, Aylmer Bourke Lambert (1761-1842) who was also a vice-president of the Linnean Society, he prepared all his own American specimens, together with appropriated ones for publication. In 1813 his *Flora Americanae Septentrionalis* was published and was the most comprehensive book on American plants according to authorities for a short time. However his disregard for others would appear to have contributed significantly to his downfall. Although he published other material after his prime work the reception was minimal. In 1816 he moved to Canada with the intent of preparing a Flora for that Country. But not only was his specimen collection lost in a fire in 1819 but he was also poor and yielding to alcoholism. He died in 1820 in Montreal.