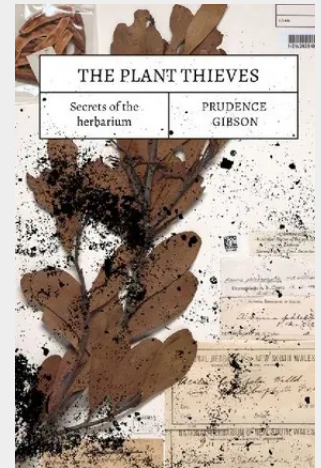


The Plant Thieves

Secrets of the herbarium

The Plant Thieves reveals remarkable stories from the National Herbarium of New South Wales – its people, its archives and its most guarded specimens. Who gets to collect plants, name them, propagate them, extract their chemicals, sell them and use them? Whose knowledge is it? And what can the people that work with plants, just outside the law, teach us about plant care? In The Plant Thieves, Prudence Gibson explores the secrets of the National Herbarium of New South Wales and unearths remarkable stories of plant naming wars, rediscovered lost species, First Nations agriculture, illegal drug labs and psychoactive plant knowledge. Gibson reveals the tale of the anti-inflammatory plant that saved a herbarium manager when she was collecting in the highlands of Papua New Guinea, stories about the secret wollemi pine plantation (from one of its botanical guardians) and the truth about a beach daisy that has changed so much in 100 years that it needs to be completely reclassified. She also follows the story of the black bean Songline, a recent collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers, to find the route of this important agriculture plant. The Plant Thieves is both a lament for lost and disappearing species and a celebration of being human, of wanting to collect things and of learning more about plant life and ourselves.

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