

## Jeanne Baret (1740 – 1807)

Jeanne Baret was a French botanist who became the first woman to circumnavigate the globe in 1769 after joining a French expedition led by Louis Antoine de Bougainville. Since women were not allowed on French navy ships at the time, Baret gained access to the expedition by disguising herself as a man and working as an assistant to the “professional” naturalist on board, Philibert Commerson, with whom she was romantically connected. During the voyage, Baret collected and documented more than 6,000 plant specimens, contributing significantly to the field of botany. While the true extent of her work is often overshadowed by Commerson, Baret is credited with discovering one of the expedition’s most significant finds, *Bougainvillea brasiliensis*, a vine with vibrant pink, purple, red, orange, and yellow bracts native to Brazil, Peru, and Bolivia.



Born into a modest family in rural France, Baret honed her expertise in plants and their medicinal properties. She pursued her botanical interests while working as a household servant and charted her own course at a time when the world of scientific discovery was largely reserved for men. To be on the cutting edge of exploration was not only an unlikely place for women but also a dangerous one.

Baret’s accomplishments are still celebrated today. In 2012, more than two centuries after her death, a newly discovered South American plant species, *Solanum baretiae*, was named in her honor.

### ABOUT THE ARTIST | Alyson Prokop

Alyson Prokop, a botanist and science educator from Toronto Canada, holds a Bachelors of Science in Plant Biology and Horticulture and pursued graduate studies in Plant Pathology. Alyson's professional career as an educational horticulturist at botanic gardens allows her to blend science and imagination in her art. With only one historical image of Baret, Prokop reimagined her through linocut—a medium reflective of Baret’s era. Baret’s commitment to plants and discovery mirrors the artist’s own passions, making her an ideal muse. This project allowed Prokop to merge her love of art and science while paying tribute to Baret’s enduring legacy in a deeply personal and creative way.

*Spanish translation coming soon.*