

Bamboo plantation set up for the pandas



Things have been a bit quiet on the panda front since the unsuccessful mating attempts earlier this year. But the pandas are still in the zoo and they need to be fed each day, so a bamboo plantation has been established within the zoo grounds to satisfy their appetites in the future.

Next to the famous giant panda enclosure, after visitors have met the black and white pair they can wander into the Zoo's new bamboo nursery. The small working nursery is packed with 250 bamboo plants and contains five different species of tried and tested bamboo species that are tried and tested to be Sunshine and Sweetie's favourites.

Eventually the working nursery will feed the two giant pandas, although its main goal is as an extra panda visitor attraction for the thousands of visitors that flock to see them each week. Incredibly it represents only 1% of the pandas' total bamboo supply each year! A larger off show bamboo nursery will be developed onsite next year that makes a much greater contribution to panda's daily diets.

A beautiful feature, the garden explains the story of bamboo – from its many uses, to how it grows – as visitors tour around it. A shrine to bamboo, and also recycling, the garden even includes left over bamboo chips underfoot and a perimeter fence of bamboo poles that pandas Sweetie and Sunshine have discarded.

Simon and Eva Paton were on hand today to have a closer look.

Photos Katie Paton

