

Scottish Rhododendron Festival coming to Botanic Gardens

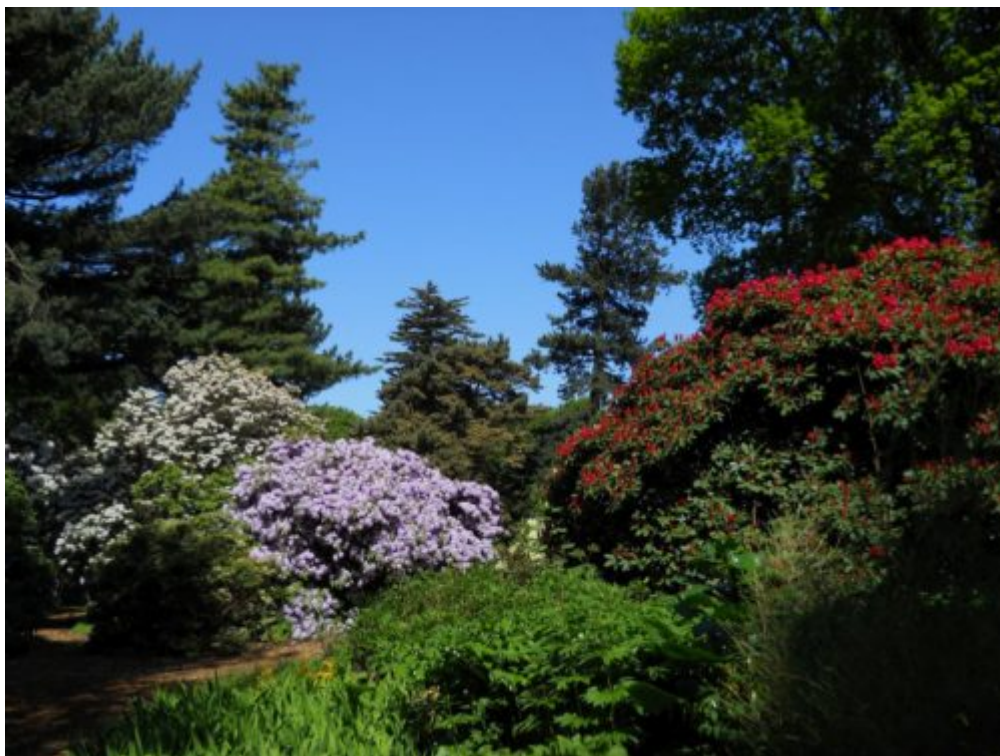


Photo by Discover Scottish Gardens

Spectacular rhododendrons will be in bloom at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh from 1 April to 31 May, as more than 50 events will take place in gardens, estates and woodlands across the country.

The Garden, which was recently upgraded to Five Stars by VisitScotland, will be offering a variety of walks throughout the festival where visitors can enjoy peace and tranquillity amongst 72 acres of stunning scenery and a world-leading collection of rhododendrons.

This year's Scottish Rhododendron Festival is geared up to be vibrant from day one, as many of these wonderful plants are already in full bloom because of the recent warmer temperatures.

Returning for its fifth year, the annual festival is organised by national garden tourism group Discover Scottish Gardens and supported by VisitScotland.

It aims to encourage local audiences and tourists to enjoy the wonders of Scottish gardens during the rhododendron flowering period and highlight the diversity of collections that can be found in Scotland.

The festival was originally founded by the Glorious Gardens of Argyll and Bute and some of the most stunning rhododendron displays can be seen in the west of Scotland at gardens including Achamore, Glenarn and Benmore Botanic Garden. Elsewhere, Inverewe, Gordon Castle and Attadale Gardens in the north provide beautiful displays, Branklyn and Glendoick Gardens in central Scotland and Dawyck, Glenwhan and Logan in the south.

Rhododendrons are a large family of around 1,000 species, from small mountain shrubs to magnificent tree-like specimens. This year, many species have been flowering earlier than usual due to higher-than-average temperatures in most parts of the country.

In February, the Met Office reported an average temperature of 6°C in the UK, which is 2.4°C above the 1981-2010 long-term average.

A southerly incursion from north Africa brought record-breaking temperatures and dry sunny weather throughout most parts of the country in the latter half of the month.

David Knott, curator at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, a world centre for Rhododendron studies, said: "The warmer temperatures we have been experiencing provide optimum conditions for these exotic shrubs, originally from the east, to thrive. The unusual weather and early flowering also highlight the impact of climate change on plants and flowering behaviour – a situation we will continue to monitor at the

Botanics.”

Paula Ward, VisitScotland Regional Leadership Director, said: “The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh is a must-visit attraction for nature lovers. Once again visitors will be able to enjoy the rhododendrons in bloom, along with many other spring flowering plants, all within this special garden.

“These visitors represent a major benefit to the city. Tourism is more than a holiday experience it is the heartbeat of the Scottish economy and touches every community, generating income, jobs and social change.”

For more information and events listings, please visit:<https://www.visitscotland.com/blog/scotland/rhododendron-festival/>