

# Royal visit to mark 350 years of the Botanic

A year after the pandemic interrupted celebrations for its 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh welcomed Their Royal Highnesses The Duke and The Duchess of Rothesay to the garden on Friday.

During the visit science, conservation, education and community engagement were all recognised.

Greeted by Dominic Fry, Chair of the Board of Trustees, and Regius Keeper, Simon Milne, MBE, the first stop was the historic Botanic Cottage. In the botanical teaching room of the Scottish Enlightenment where Their Royal Highnesses met key science staff and heard news of current research and forthcoming initiatives addressing the impact of the biodiversity crisis and climate emergency.



Scientists, Michelle Hart and Rebecca Yahr, giving an insight of their work to HRH The Duke of Rothesay.

Out in the garden, The Duke and The Duchess chatted with local people whose health and wellbeing has benefitted from spending time in the open air with nature. They also spoke to staff and volunteers responsible for delivering a range of activities aimed at engaging the wider community with the environment.



The Duke met ladies from the Women's Community group and heard about their involvement in the Botanics' Edible Gardening Project.

The last time His Royal Highness, Patron of RBGE, was joined at the Garden by Her Royal Highness was in 2006 for the opening of the Queen Mother's Memorial Garden. Today, Their Royal Highnesses received updates on plans to rejuvenate the area for a new generation of visitors.

The Duke and The Duchess also had an opportunity to learn more about the imminent start of the Edinburgh Biomes project to restore the Garden's A-Listed public Glasshouses, and replace the aging research houses.

Before leaving, Their Royal Highnesses met horticultural staff and students and heard about new plant health initiatives, conservation horticulture and rhododendron conservation.

Finally, a year on from the Garden's 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the

royal couple planted a young *Sorbus pallescens* from China to mark the historic event.

**The *Sorbus pallescens*** was wild collected in China by RBGE horticulturists Martyn Dickson and David Tricker in 2016. This was during fieldwork near the Lijiang Alpine Botanic Garden and Jade Dragon Field station which the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh shares with Kunming Institute of Botany and is part of a collaborative conservation programme.

Seed was collected and split into three shares, the majority going to the Germplasm Bank of Wild Species at the Kunming Institute of Botany. A small amount came to Edinburgh and the remainder stayed at the Jade Dragon Field Station where it was sown and the arising saplings planted on the Yulongxueshan, within the partnership's conservation area.

Simon Milne said it had provided a valuable opportunity to explain the diversity of the organisation and the experiences of some of those people with whom it engages. He said: "The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh means many different things to different people.

"The one million visitors we welcome to our four magnificent Gardens each year come to discover 13,500 species of plants from around the globe. Increasingly, many are also discovering how being in a green space can bring real benefits to their physical and mental wellbeing. Yet, behind the beauty and tranquillity of our Gardens, is a world-class scientific institution and a centre of excellence for plant conservation and education. For those of us who work here, it is all these things. We are privileged to be part of one of the world's finest and most respected botanic gardens and it has been an honour to share some of our stories with The Duke and Duchess of Rothesay."



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