

Botanics pay homage to 19th century head gardener

The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE) have remembered their former head gardener, William McNab. by planting bulbs at his grave to provide a colourful display in 2023 marking 175 years since his death.

Kirsty Wilson is the Botanics' Herbaceous Supervisor and she helped to plant a carefully curated collection of bulbs, tubers and corms. The first flowers scilla and crocus are expected to be in bloom in January 2023. Each month there will be a different species flowering with tulips in April and crocosmia in August, and snowdrops expected to flower on 1 December 2023 which is the anniversary of McNab's death.

William McNab was the Superintendent or Head Gardener at the Botanics, and was highly thought of by King George III. He received a diamond ring from the Tsar of Russia. He was an innovator and was responsible for the removal of thousands of plants from the site where the garden used to be on Leith Walk to its new and current site in Inverleith. He built a tree transporting machine enabling him to move large shrubs and trees successfully through the streets to the new location. This was mentioned by Sara Sheridan in her novel *The Fair Botanists*.

The flowers are expected to continue blooming annually at the grave in New Calton Burial Ground which lies on a deep south facing slope looking down to Holyrood Palace and the Scottish

Parliament. It is in this graveyard that Robert Louis Stevenson is buried.



Herbaceous Supervisor Kirsty Wilson and Serials Librarian Graham Hardy, at William McNab's grave, New Calton Burial Ground, Edinburgh



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