

Botanics marks 175th anniversary of death of Chief Gardener

In a quiet ceremony in New Calton Burial Ground, a wreath was laid to mark the 175th anniversary of the death of William McNab. He was the former Chief Gardener of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE) and a great unsung Scottish horticulturist of the 19th century.

The garland, created by Botanics' Herbaceous Supervisor Kirsty Wilson from natural materials in the Garden, is the culmination of a year-long botanical event which began, in late 2022, with the planting of over 200 carefully selected bulbs, tubers and corms on McNab's untended grave. As each month passed, new flowers bloomed in succession – from tulips in April to crocosmia in August – blossoming in celebration of the life and achievements of this remarkable Scottish son.

As well as his immense horticultural experience, McNab (1780–1848) was also an innovator and responsible for the safe removal of thousands of plants from the Garden's third site on Leith Walk to its current location in Inverleith. Using his tree transporting machine, McNab successfully transported large shrubs and trees through the streets to the new site – an amazing venture that was celebrated in Sara Sheridan's novel *The Fair Botanists*.





