

Smelly plant spectacle expected any day

Plans are being put in place to allow people to experience the world's most pungent plant – known as the corpse flower – as it prepares to bloom in a tropical hothouse at the capital's botanic garden.

Experts monitoring the rare and endangered *Amorphophallus titanum* (titan arum) at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE) say it has shot up to over two metres in height in recent days.

The giant plant – named New Reekie by staff at the attraction – is expected to burst into bloom as soon as Monday or, possibly more likely, Tuesday night.

It will then emit the eye watering stench of rotting flesh that gives it its “corpse flower” nickname, designed to attract pollinating insects before it wilts again after just a few days.

The public glasshouses have been closed since late 2020 for the multimillion-pound Edinburgh Biomes restoration project, but RBGE officials are making special arrangements to allow visitors limited access.

Thousands of people are expected to flock to the Garden to see the impressive flower bloom for only the fifth time.

Those who visit will also experience the infamous smell, which has also been compared with old bins, sweaty shoes and sewage.

Fiona Inches, RBGE Glasshouse Manager, said: "It's an exciting time. For a while it didn't look like it was going to be that big but it came up quite quickly, growing at 10 or 11cm per day.

"It's over two metres tall now and still pushing up so it's getting close to flowering for just the fifth time.

"It will happen at night and we're hoping that we can allow people to come and see it from the next day with timed tickets."

Native only to West Sumatra, the endangered *Amorphophallus titanum* is famous for its size, smell, and the relative rarity of its bloom.

The "dead-meat" stench is caused by a mix of gases emitted by the heating up of parts of the central flower spike at night.

Edinburgh's famous specimen was a corm the size of an orange when it was given to RBGE in 2003. In 2010 it weighed 153.9kg, making it the largest ever recorded.

It was nurtured in a tropical glasshouse for 12 years before finally flowering for the first time in 2015, in a first for Scotland.

It flowered again in 2017, 2019 and 2022, which researchers thought might be its last smelly bloom. Experts are thrilled that the phenomenon is set to be repeated in the coming days.

Sadie Barber, Research Collections Manager at RBGE, said: "The same plant flowering five times is a rare thing. There is still so much to learn about the biology and behaviour of this enigmatic species."



Amorphophallus Titanum at RBGE PHOTO Saltire News and Sport Ltd



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