

Million plants digitised by the Botanics

Edinburgh's botanical garden has digitised one million plants as part of a project to make its collection accessible to people around the world.

The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE) is creating a digital record of its renowned Herbarium collection of over three million preserved plant specimens from 157 countries.

Historically hard to access, it is now being digitised into high-resolution images that can be viewed by anyone with an internet connection.

The digitised platform now sees requests come in from across the globe from students, scientists and plant enthusiasts.

The one millionth specimen to be digitised was *Stereocaulon vesuvianum*, a species of lichen collected from Ben Nevis in 2021.

RBGE lichenologist Dr Rebecca Yahr, who collected the specimen during a climb up Scotland's tallest mountain, said: "Celebrating the milestone with this important specimen is an exciting opportunity for us to highlight Scotland's unique biodiversity and extend RBGE's mission to research and understand lichens more generally."

The expedition on which the millionth digitised specimen was collected was part of RBGE's contribution to the groundbreaking Darwin Tree of Life (DToL) project to unlock DNA sequences of every complex living organism in Great Britain and Ireland.

Professor Olwen Grace, Curator of the Herbarium and leader of the digitisation project, said: "Being able to share this

information with scientific communities as well as the public allows us to develop a more robust understanding of biodiversity challenges and the solutions that can help us build resilience to shifting climates.



“At the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, we see it as our moral imperative to share this information, especially when we are facing a global biodiversity crisis.”