

New Botanics exhibition celebrates Scottish Ash

At the Botanics from Friday there is a new exhibition showing the potential of using native Scottish ash.

Furniture makers artists and designers have all brought their works to the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE) to take part in Ash Rise. This is a gathering of furniture, craft and design celebrating Scottish ash. It will run until 12 January before touring to Dumfries and Inverness. Highlighting the versatility, durability and value to Scotland's biodiversity, *Ash Rise* was conceived to both celebrate Scottish creativity and to inform people of the environmental and economic impacts of ash dieback, a destructive fungus affecting ash trees. The exhibition also highlights the sustainability of working with locally sourced native hardwoods, milled and dried in Scotland connecting each step of the process from 'tree to table'.

The exhibition is a collaboration between Scottish Furniture Makers Association (SFMA), Scottish Forestry (SF) and the Association of Scottish Hardwood Sawmillers (ASHS). The purpose is to highlight the impact of ash dieback in Scotland through a nationwide exhibition and education outreach programme.

A collection of 20 exhibitors will transform the native hardwood into ambitious new pieces of furniture, art and design.

The diseased Scottish ash was felled at Killearn Farm in Stirlingshire in November 2021. Artists and makers were invited to propose new ideas for it. Now ten Scotland based furniture makers and members of SFMA propose new pieces alongside ten artists and designers who have produced sculpture, design and artworks in paper.

The design selection panel for *Ash Rise* drew on external specialists in furniture design, including Stephen Jackson, Senior Curator, Furniture and Woodwork at National Museums Scotland, David Jones, Furniture Historian and lecturer at St Andrews and Christina Jansen, Managing Director of Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh.

In addition to *Ash Rise* touring the length of Scotland, Scottish Furniture Makers Association have commissioned a special documentary to reach wider audiences in Scotland and beyond. The feature film will document the life of the tree, its place in the environment and the struggles it faces. From forester or land owner, through to tree surgeon, sawmill, maker and buyer every link in the chain will be introduced, demystifying the process of how locally sourced furniture is made.

Tom Addy the project coordinator and furniture maker said: "Ash Rise is a culmination of a three year project which started with the idea of highlighting how precious this resource is in Scotland whilst also showcasing the skills and creativity of the furniture making and design community.

"We're delighted to be able to tour this exhibition to Edinburgh, Dumfries and Inverness in three stunning venues to bring the story of Scottish Ash to as wide an audience as possible. Education and outreach is a key part of this project which is why the Ash Rise film was commissioned to reach even more people educating the viewer in the historical and cultural importance of the material and the skills used to turn a tree into finished piece.

“The selection panel were hugely impressed by the submissions and the final 20 selected showcase designs that both honour the wood’s unique properties and highlight the importance of awareness of ash dieback. We’re excited to share the amazing, beautiful things that can be made from ash.

“From modern interpretations of traditional Scottish furniture and technically ambitious pieces to designs that use all parts of the tree alongside artworks highlighting the value, life and importance of Scottish Ash we can’t wait to welcome visitors to Ash Rise when it opens on 13 September at Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh.”

Ash Rise

13 September 2024 – 12 January 2025

Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, Inverleith Row, Edinburgh EH3 5NZ www.scottishfurnituremakers.org.uk



Boatbuilder Stephen Thomson delivers his ash framed kayak to Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh for Ash Rise Pic Neil Hanna



Boatbuilder Stephen Thomson gets help from Tom Addy of Scottish Furniture Makers Association delivering his ash framed kayak to Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh for Ash Rise Pic Neil Hanna



PHOTO Neil Hanna



Rowan Addy takes a moment in Skila a new Orkney Chair made by Kevin Guald for Ash Rise PHOTO Neil Hanna