

Busy opening night for Royal Botanic Garden light show

The thermometer hovered in low single figures, but crowds homed in on The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh on opening night of Christmas at the Botanics.

Vibrant bursts of light could be seen shooting through branches of trees near the entrance to the annual show which this year runs for 35 nights until December 30.

Raoul Curtis-Machin, director of horticulture and visitor experience, said mystery and surprise were the theme for this festive season and visitors, young and old, witnessed the garden transformed by many new installations.

There is also an eco-friendly element as 95 per cent of the lights on the extensive trail are LED and the event has been assembled to complement the Botanics' existing landscape.

Around 80 per cent of the trail has been given a fresh perspective, but the hugely-popular Christmas Cathedral, the backdrop for many happy memories from previous years, is included. Santa is also there, housed in a special area.

New installations include Sea of Light with thousands of individually controlled LED lights, reminiscent of the roots of trees and plants that twist and turn.

A sparkling flock of red, gold, bronze and orange robins, their sequined feathers shimmering in the breeze, was also appreciated and the Pealit Tree excites.

There, thousands of tiny LED lights illuminate the Turner oak, *Quercus turneri Pseudoturneri*, one of the garden's mightiest trees and a country champion in Scotland for its remarkable girth.

Firework trees was our favourite. It is the last exhibit and brought an enjoyable walk to a real climax.

The busy garden, one of Britain's leading garden attractions, welcomes over 1 million visitors a year and Curtis-Machin said that the show kick-starts Christmas for many.

Cash raised from the winter light show supports the garden's wider work to tackle the biodiversity crisis and climate emergency.

Ticket sales also helps fund the Botanic's international plant research, conservation work and education programmes, strengthening its commitment to building a positive future for plants, people and the planet.

Sarah Cathcart, director of learning and engagement at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, added: "Each installation depicts a story about the inspiration taken from the natural world, encouraging visitors of all ages to think more deeply about protecting our planet."

An off-peak offer is available and it features reduced-priced family tickets and visitors are encouraged to book in advance to guarantee their preferred time slot.

Incidentally, Christmas at the Botanic is one of 14 illuminated trails staged across the UK by leading events promoter RG Live, a division of Sony Music and the event is presented in partnership with creative producer Culture Creative.

For more details visit www.rbge.org.uk/christmas and follow @mychristmastrails on Facebook and Instagram.



