ROYAL BOTANIC GARDEN EDINBURGH

# Technician Conservator

## Herbarium

## Job Description

### Purpose of role

The Technician Conservator supports the safe and effective delivery of RBGE's herbarium digitisation programme. The role provides conservation skills to assess, stabilise, and repair herbarium specimens prior to digitisation, ensuring they can be safely handled and imaged without risk of damage.

Digitisation involves repeated handling of often fragile, historic specimens. Without appropriate conservation input, there is a significant risk of deterioration, loss of material, or compromised data capture. This role ensures that specimens are prepared to an appropriate standard for imaging while contributing to their longer-term preservation.

The post brings necessary practical conservation expertise into the workflow, bridging the gap between collections care and digitisation production.

### Main Duties and Responsibilities

#### Conservation Assessment

- Assess the physical condition of herbarium specimens prior to digitisation.
- Identify risks such as tears, detached elements, brittle paper, pest damage, or historic repairs.
- Prioritise specimens for treatment based on condition and project timelines.

#### Conservation Treatment

Undertake minimal, appropriate conservation treatments including:

- Surface cleaning
- Repair of tears using suitable conservation-grade materials
- Reattachment of plant fragments or labels
- Stabilisation of fragile or damaged specimens
- Ensure all treatments follow current conservation standards and ethical guidelines

#### Collection Handling & Care

- Handle herbarium specimens safely and appropriately at all times.
- Rehouse specimens in suitable archival materials where required.
- Support safe movement of collections within the digitisation workflow.

## Documentation

- Record condition assessments and conservation treatments accurately.
- Maintain clear, consistent documentation in line with project requirements.
- Contribute to reporting on conservation outputs and progress.

## Collaboration

- Work closely with herbarium staff, including digitisers, curatorial assistants and specimen preparers, and project leads.
- Communicate any conservation concerns that may affect digitisation quality or timelines.
- Contribute to improving workflows and processes.

ROYAL BOTANIC GARDEN EDINBURGH

# Person Specification

## Essential Skills

- Practical experience in conservation or collections care (e.g. paper, archive, or herbarium materials)
- Understanding of basic conservation principles (minimal intervention, reversibility, documentation)
- Experience handling fragile heritage collections
- Strong attention to detail and manual dexterity
- Ability to work efficiently within a production-focused environment
- Good organisational and record-keeping skills
- Proven ability to manage competing priorities and adapt to changing demands
- A relevant degree or qualification, or equivalent knowledge and expertise gained through professional experience

## Desirable

- Experience working with herbarium specimens or botanical collections
- Knowledge of archival materials and conservation-grade adhesives
- Experience supporting digitisation projects or large-scale collections work