

ROYAL BOTANIC GARDEN EDINBURGH



Curator – Dawyck Botanic Garden Candidate Pack

February 2026





ABOUT US

The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh is a world-renowned centre for plant study, conservation, biodiversity innovation, horticulture and education as well as a hugely popular tourist attraction. Founded in 1670 as a physic garden for growing medicinal plants, it has evolved into a global leader in plant science, conservation, horticulture and education. Key features include:

Four Gardens: Our four distinct Gardens - Edinburgh, Benmore, Dawyck and Logan - each feature their own unique plant collections and specialities, adapted to their microclimates.

Edinburgh: Behind the science, conservation and education facilities, is a tranquil oasis in the heart of the city. Across 72 acres, the Garden showcases nearly 60,000 plants from around the world in themed plantings. Features such as the Rock Garden and Chinese Hillside, with their known wild origin material, are internationally renowned. The public Glasshouses, including the iconic A-Listed Palm Houses, are currently closed for major restoration as part of the [Edinburgh Biomes Project](#).

Benmore: On a mountainside in Argyll, Benmore is celebrated for its magnificent and scientifically significant collection of rhododendrons and conifers. Its stunning setting features significant collections from Chile, Bhutan and Japan.

Dawyck: Situated in the Scottish Borders, Dawyck Botanic Garden is famous for its heritage and conservation of trees and shrubs, particularly those from the mountainous regions of Nepal, Asia, and North America.

Logan: On the south-western tip of Scotland, Logan enjoys a mild climate influenced by the Gulf Stream, allowing it to cultivate a variety of exotic plants from the Southern Hemisphere not usually seen this far north.

Globally important Living Collection: We hold one of the world's largest and richest plant collections, with over 13,500 plant species, many of which are under threat, economically or ethnobotanically important, or still to be scientifically described.

Global Conservation: We inspire and participate in global conservation projects, aiming to protect plant biodiversity and address environmental challenges.

Herbarium: The Herbarium contains over three million preserved specimens, making it a valuable global resource for scientific research and education.

Education: We inspire others through a range of educational programmes and courses for all ages; promoting plant science, horticulture and conservation.

Visitor Attraction: Together, our four Gardens constitute one of Scotland's premier visitor attractions, offering beautiful landscapes, engagement with nature, public programmes and seasonal events. As a popular destination for both tourists and locals, the Royal Botanic Garden of Edinburgh attracts over one million visitors annually across its four Gardens.

The Edinburgh Garden offers free admission to the outdoor areas, making it an accessible and enriching experience for all with paid admission at Benmore, Logan and Dawyck.

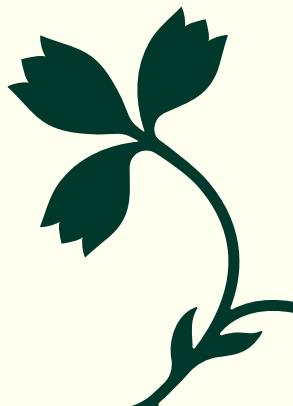
The organisation's international profile is bolstered by extensive collaborations with partners worldwide, including the Kunming Institute of Botany in China. These relationships enhance research capabilities and conservation initiatives, making us a pivotal player in addressing global environmental challenges.

The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh is a charity, and a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) sponsored and supported through Grant-in-Aid by the Scottish Government's Environment and Forestry Directorate. It is governed by a Board of Trustees appointed by Scottish Ministers. The Botanics Trading Company Limited, established in 1992, is our commercial arm, generating funds through various business ventures to support our mission.

The organisation comprises over 320 staff drawn from a variety of disciplines, contributing in many ways to its overall objectives and functions.

The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh also has a legal status as an academic institution.

rbge.org.uk



OUR PRIORITIES

To deliver our mission '**to explore, conserve and explain the world of plants**', our work is guided by three strategic priorities:

- **Unlocking knowledge and understanding of plants and fungi for the benefit of society:** Our scientific research will focus on understanding the threats to species and biomes and their likely responses to environmental change. We are developing enhanced strategies and actions for conserving biodiversity at home and around the world.
- **Conserving and developing botanical collections as a global resource:** We curate and enhance the National Botanical Collection of Scotland as a scientific and cultural heritage resource and support the wider development of botanical collections, particularly in countries in the Global South.
- **Enriching and empowering individuals and communities through learning and engagement with plants and fungi:** Our work builds global capacity to respond to the biodiversity crisis and climate emergency by developing and sharing scientific, conservation and horticultural knowledge through education and engagement with the public.

We are now approaching the final stages of our 2021 – 2026 strategy [Responding to the Biodiversity Crisis and Climate Emergency](#).

OUR VALUES

We work collaboratively

We value evidence

We cultivate curiosity

Vision

A positive future
for plants, people
and planet.

Mission

To explore, conserve
and explain the world
of plants.



THE ROLE

Dawyck Botanic Garden is one of the world's finest arboreta and renowned for its seasonal displays. The garden welcomes approximately 40,000 visitors a year to explore its 65 acres of trees and burnside walks including carpets of snowdrops, drifts of bluebells, vibrant displays of rhododendrons, meconopsis, species rich grassland and outstanding autumn colour.

Living collection management and horticulture is changing, as we embrace a more holistic attitude to our landscape management. This means being more attuned to benefitting biodiversity as a whole and being more reactive to the immediate impacts of our changing climate, adopting nature-based solutions and thinking. We adopt rigorous biosecurity protocols in our Living Collections management, zero peat use, and reduced chemical use. Dawyck matches the importance of its plant collection with environmental principles through modern hydro electric systems and green technology initiatives achieving the status of the first carbon neutral garden in the UK.

At RBGE, the culture is collaborative and community orientated, and the Curator and their team will work closely with all organisational divisions, including the Botanic Trading Company (BTC) staff to achieve our vision and mission.

Purpose

The Curator of Dawyck Botanic Garden gives visionary leadership for Dawyck, this includes the planning, management, development, and presentation of the garden to the highest horticultural standards. Also, to lead and motivate the gardens team, working collaboratively across RBGE departments to develop and deliver RBGE strategy goals and a great visitor experience.

Living Collection & Visitor Experience

- Care and cultivation of the Living Collection as set out in the RBGE Living Collection Policy and relevant management and strategic plans, including exemplary plant records management;
- Maintain the highest standards of presentation, horticulture, and biosecurity in the gardens, adapting to climate change, and driving sustainable garden management practices, including decarbonisation, zero peat use and chemical use reduction;
- Work collaboratively with science teams to deliver the ambitions of RBGE science and conservation programmes, such as the International Conifer Conservation Programme;
- Work collaboratively with the Visitor Welcome, Commercial, and Estates teams to deliver a great customer service culture;
- Work collaboratively with public engagement and arts teams to ensure interpretation and exhibitions are current and well-presented. Lead on delivery of gardens tours, talks and events on site;
- Lead garden tours, talks, and events that bring our story to life for diverse audiences.

Operational Leadership & Safety

- Lead the over-all site operations, participate in and also ensure that on-call cover is in place for when the garden is open to the public, including winter shutdown;
- Lead on recruitment, deployment, development and management of gardens staff, apprentices, students, and volunteers, including national and international fieldwork opportunities;
- Ensure health and safety compliance for visitors and staff on site. This includes implementing and updating RBGE safe working systems and ensuring staff training and health surveillance needs are met;
- Work closely and collaboratively with other teams, including estates, commercial, learning and engagement, development and communications, and science, to ensure that targets for maintenance, income generation and information provision are met;
- Project management of significant gardens projects, and/or inputting into larger project management processes;
- Management and oversight of contractors on site, ensuring compliance and visitor safety needs are met, and where possible ensuring quality and value of work.

Strategy, Planning & Finance

- Budget holder with responsibility for creation and management of annual departmental budgets, including procurement compliance working with RBGE finance team;
- Lead on the ongoing development and delivery of gardens plans and policies, ensuring compatibility with our RBGE plans and strategies. Input into, and report on RBGE strategies and organisation delivery plans;
- Work collaboratively with the supporter groups to maintain a good working relationship and ongoing support;
- Lead and contribute to the development, procurement, and delivery of capital projects within the garden.

Leadership & Community Engagement

- Be an active member of the RBGE Senior Leadership Team, representing Dawyck and enabling cross divisional opportunities;
- Build and maintain good relationships with neighbours, supporter groups, and local stakeholders;
- Represent RBGE on external stakeholder groups and to the media, acting as an ambassador for the organisation and the individual gardens in the UK and internationally.



PERSON SPECIFICATION

Essential:

- Excellent plant knowledge, especially of temperate trees, shrubs and herbaceous species.
- Experience working with scientific plant collections in a botanic garden setting.
- A strong grasp of modern horticultural practices including plant conservation, collections management, plant health and veteran tree management.
- Strong leadership skills with a track record of managing horticultural teams, students and volunteers.
- Proven project management experience in horticultural settings.
- Solid understanding of health and safety legislation, including risk assessments and COSHH.
- Excellent communication and digital skills, with confidence in public speaking and media engagement.
- Relevant qualifications: National Certificate or SVQ Level 3 in horticulture (or equivalent experience), plus a Diploma in Horticulture.
- A valid UK driver's licence.

Desirable:

- Experience working in either heritage, cultural or academic sectors focussed on delivering an optimal customer experience.
- Experience with procurement, budgeting, and contributing to fundraising.
- Experience teaching horticultural skills and plant ID.



TERMS OF APPOINTMENT

This role is based at Dawyck Botanic Garden with occasional travel to Edinburgh and our Benmore and Logan regional gardens.

We offer a generous employment package:

- Annually alongside your salary of £49,204 to £54,875, RBGE contributes 28.97% of this towards you being a member of the defined benefit [Civil Service Pension scheme](#). Your pension pot in this scheme will grow by 2.32% per year.
- 25 days holiday entitlement on appointment, increasing to 30 days after 2 years of service, with the option to buy additional holidays.
- 11.5 days of public and privilege holidays annually.
- A range of staff support mechanisms, including an employee assistance programme, cycle to work and staff discount schemes.
- A number of family-friendly options to support work-life balance, including flexible working arrangements, enhanced contractual maternity, paternity, adoption, and shared parental leave, and career breaks.
- Discounts in our shop, restaurants, and cafes.



HOW TO APPLY

To apply, please email recruitment@rbge.org.uk with:

- Your CV
- A covering letter outlining the skills, knowledge and experience you would bring to the role
- A digitally completed equal opportunities questionnaire*: [EOQ form](#)

The closing date for applications is midday on Wednesday, 11 March 2026 with interviews to be held on Thursday, 26 March 2026 at Dawyck.

To arrange an informal discussion about the role, please contact Sarah Packford at spackford@rbge.org.uk

*The equal opportunities monitoring online form will not be shared with anyone involved in assessing your application. Please complete as part of the application process.

DAWYCK BOTANIC GARDEN

