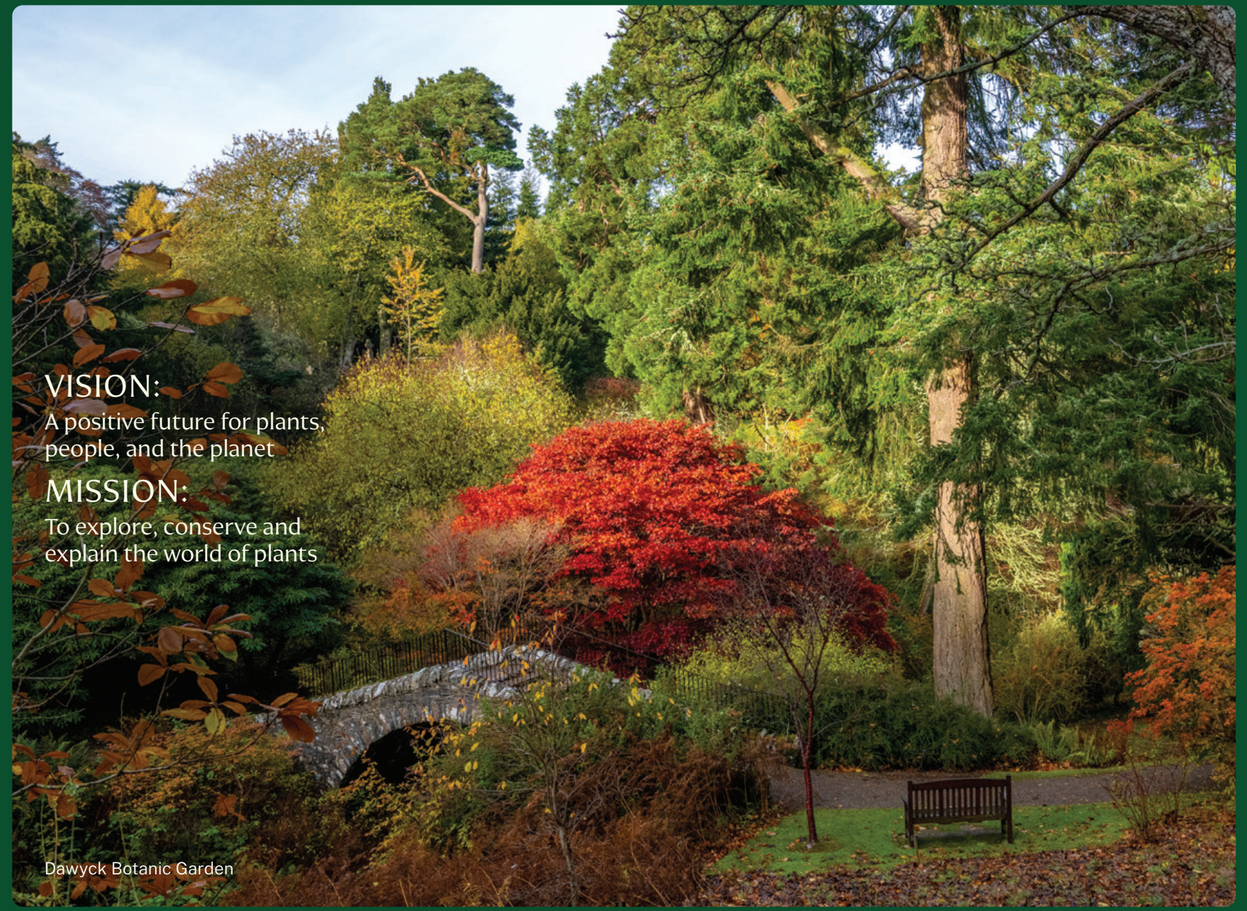
DONOR IMPACT REPORT

2026



ROYAL BOTANIC GARDEN EDINBURGH



VISION:

A positive future for plants, people, and the planet

MISSION:

To explore, conserve and explain the world of plants

Dawyck Botanic Garden

FOUR GARDENS, ONE BOTANIC WORLD



In the last year, your support strengthened our ability to respond to a rapidly changing world. At a time when biodiversity, climate resilience and community wellbeing face unprecedented pressures, your commitment empowers us to act with ambition. From advancing critical research and expanding our living collections, to restoring fragile habitats and deepening public engagement with the natural world, your partnership is helping to drive meaningful, measurable progress.

At the heart of our community is you: our patrons, donors and supporters. Your generosity each year is shaped by a long tradition of scientific inquiry, education, and environmental stewardship — a mission that continues to guide us with purpose and clarity.

Your contribution also fuels innovative work that is shaping solutions for the future. Whether it's developing nature-based approaches that help cities adapt to extreme weather, or studying the intricate relationships between plants, pollinators, and urban ecosystems, your support ensures that our science informs real-world action.

These efforts not only strengthen our planting decisions at our own four Gardens at Benmore, Dawyck, Edinburgh and Logan — they also influence horticulture practice across Scotland and beyond, inspiring wider understanding of adaptation and mitigation strategies in a changing climate.

We are proud of what we have achieved together, and even more energised by what lies ahead. With your continued partnership, we will build on this momentum, deepen our impact, and pursue new opportunities to protect the natural world for generations to come.

It is a privilege to be part of the Botanics team, and to count you among our closest supporters. I feel honoured to lead this important, historic institution and build further on its world class legacy over the last 355 years.

We look forward to sharing new discoveries with you, celebrating progress, and revealing the enduring beauty and purpose behind our work across all four of our Gardens.

Julia Knights

Professor Julia Knights CHort, FRSB
17th Regius Keeper

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

1,200,000 +
herbarium specimens now digitised, powering research around the world

11,600
supporting members



1,076,154
visitors welcomed to Edinburgh, Benmore, Dawyck & Logan

216
scientific publications

3,306
young people connected through schools outreach across Scotland

14,689
engaged learners

19,384
hours of volunteer support

1,850
endangered Oblong Woodsia (*Woodsia ilvensis*) ferns grown and planted out across Scotland to create new, self-sustaining populations

49
giant redwoods saved at Benmore's reopened Sequoia Avenue

600
plants returned to the restored Palm Houses, ahead of reopening

OUR DONOR COMMUNITY

Across four Gardens, more than 800 supporters joined us at in-person engagements through the year, from our community of over 13,000 members and donors.

These included:
- exhibition previews
- regional garden showcases
- dinners, receptions and lunches
- behind the scenes tours and talks

You supported:
- storm damage recovery
- local community outreach projects
- the completion of our Palm Houses restoration
- apprenticeships across our four Gardens
- global conservation expeditions and fieldwork
- Scottish plant recovery











£7,338,104

raised, a year of remarkable donor support

















YOUR IMPACT: NATURE CHANGES LIVES

The Learning & Engagement programme at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh brings people and nature together: championing biodiversity while building confidence, skills and wellbeing in communities, young people and learners across Scotland.

We launched an extended schools outreach programme, with more than 20,000 pupil engagements since 2023 including all 32 local authorities across Scotland. In addition, donations helped us provide bursaries to enable school travel to the Garden that wouldn't otherwise be possible.

Education Outreach Officer, Eve Armstrong (pictured right), received international recognition for the impact of this work, winning the 2026 Marsh Award for Education in Botanic Gardens.

Through initiatives including the Expedition Botanics summer school, we gave young people a behind-the-scenes look at careers in plants, science and conservation.

Our Engaging Gardens programme offered community groups from diverse backgrounds year-round workshops. We arranged cooking sessions and pop-up events to enhance mental wellbeing and inspire a deeper appreciation for plants.

We also created paid Biodiversity Ambassador traineeships and secured funding for a new apprenticeship at Logan, helping to build the next generation of environmental professionals.



YOUR IMPACT: RESPONDING TO CLIMATE CHALLENGES

STORM DAMAGE RECOVERY

Over 500 trees were lost across our four Gardens in early 2025, the majority in Benmore, as Storm Éowyn caused damage across the UK. Infrastructure was damaged and paths destroyed. Your generous and fast response to our appeal, with over £200,000 raised, meant we were able to clear the Gardens, hire the equipment needed, and open all four Gardens to the public with minimal closures.

Our single span tunnel in Benmore, flattened by the storm, has been repaired and re-skinned with shade netting to allow for another layer of protection for our young and vulnerable species.

NATURE BASED SOLUTIONS AND STORM MITIGATION

The challenge

Data shows that not only are we getting more rain every year, but our rainfall patterns are changing. Instead of steady, consistent rain, we are experiencing intense storm events followed by long stretches of drought. Effectively adapting to the effects of climate change will mean planning for water resilience: times of both flood and drought.

For the last several decades a large sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) tree stood near the John Hope Gateway in Edinburgh, in an area prone to flooding. However, it sickened and had to be removed. Without its extensive living root system in this hillside, more water could flow toward the John Hope Gateway building during storms.

The solution

Last year, a new planting system was devised so that the drain across the path opens into a small stream. The strategic placement of plants guides the water to slow down before emptying into a wallow, redirecting stormwater to where it can safely pond while providing for nature. The plants are chosen to be suitable for both the water conditions and the understory of a woodland. The central tree is a cork oak (*Quercus variabilis*), integrating well with the existing trees of the oak lawn.

With support from donors and funding partners, the Nature Based Solutions, Horticulture, and Education teams of the Botanics have collaborated to build an understanding of our changing climate into our curriculum. This new feature was designed in part by Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh horticulture students, with supervision from Nature Based Solutions scientists and senior supervisory horticulturists.







LOOKING AHEAD

GARDENS FOR THE FUTURE

The Edinburgh Biomes programme is one of the most ambitious projects in the Garden's history. The reopened Palm Houses have created a renewed and inspiring space for immersive encounters with remarkable plant collections from around the world.

Looking ahead, we will build on this momentum with plans for a new Plant Health Hub to tackle pests and diseases, upgraded research glasshouses, and facilities designed to advance horticultural innovation and develop the green skills needed for the future. Work progresses on a new Sustainable Energy Centre, with the aim to reduce carbon emissions while supporting climate resilience.

We are grateful to our supporters and partners, whose continued engagement will ensure the Garden continues to protect plants, inspire people and generate the knowledge needed to understand and mitigate some of the world's greatest environmental challenges. This support is critical, contributing directly to efforts to address biodiversity loss both here in Scotland, and across the globe.



ENGAGING WITH THE JOY OF PLANTS

With additional philanthropic support, we aim to expand our schools outreach with new locations, subjects, and formats. Flexible nature-skills training linked to green careers would deepen partnerships across our gardens, growing nature-based health and wellbeing programmes in community, education and care settings.

A key ambition is to extend the programme's reach into areas that have so far had limited opportunities. With additional funding, we hope to deliver activities in remote and rural communities including Lewis and Harris, and other island locations. With your continued support we will inspire more young people to see themselves as future scientists, conservationists and environmental leaders.



THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS

- Members
- Donors
- Legacy pledgers
- Patrons of the Curator's Circle and Regius Keeper's Circle
- Trusts and foundations
- Corporate sponsors and supporters

To further your impact, contact the Development team or visit rbge.org.uk/support-us





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Patron His Majesty the King

Email development@rbge.org.uk
Visit www.rbge.org.uk/support-us

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Financial statistics in this publication cover the period April 2025 to March 2026. All other statistics and information is accurate to the best of our knowledge at the time of publication.

The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh is supported by Grant in Aid by the Scottish Government's Environment and Forestry Directorate (ENFOR).

The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh is a registered Scottish charity, number SC007983

