



Celebrating 400 years
1621 - 2021
Oxford Botanic Garden
& Arboretum



PRESS RELEASE

25th July 2021

His Royal Highness, The Prince of Wales, visits Oxford Botanic Garden

On Tuesday 8th June, Oxford Botanic Garden was delighted to receive a visit from His Royal Highness, The Prince of Wales, in celebration of the 400th Anniversary of Britain's oldest botanic garden.

The Prince of Wales is Patron of Oxford Botanic Garden & Arboretum (OBGA) and the Friends of OBGA. On arrival at the Garden His Royal Highness was received by the Vice Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire, Mr Brian Buchan, before meeting Professor Louise Richardson, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford, Professor Anne Trefethen, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Gardens, Libraries and Museums (GLAM), Professor Simon Hiscock, Director of OBGA, Mrs Sarah Taylor, Chairman of the Friends of OBGA, Professor Richard Mayou, Former Chairman of the Friends of OBGA, and Mr Mark Brent, Curator and Head of Horticulture at the Botanic Garden.

Professor Hiscock said:

“It was a great honour to welcome our Patron, The Prince of Wales, in our 400th year and to have the opportunity to share the important work we do at the Botanic Garden and Arboretum in our strategic mission of ‘sharing the scientific wonder and importance of plants with the world’. This visit acknowledges the important role played by institutions such as ours in research, education, conservation and public engagement. Just as we were established as the Oxford Physic Garden for growing medicinal plants used to teach medical students, we now teach and research plant biology in diverse ways, whilst communicating to everyone - students and the public alike – about why plants matter and why they are essential to the sustainability of our planet, its biodiversity, and ultimately to our own survival as a species.”



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To mark the occasion, His Royal Highness planted a special tree, propagated from a seed of the black pine (*Pinus nigra*), which was planted in the Garden in the 1830s and much loved by JRR Tolkien. The original tree, often referred to as 'Tolkien's Pine', shed two huge branches in 2014 and had to be felled.

During his tour of the historic Walled Garden His Royal Highness was introduced to two of the Botanic Garden's longest serving horticulturalists, Mrs Claire Kelly (34 years of service) and Mr Richard East (30 years of service).

Professor Louise Richardson, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford, said:

"We were delighted to welcome The Prince of Wales to Oxford once again, especially on the 400th Anniversary of the Botanic Garden, a much-loved Oxford institution that is as much a part of the heritage of the city and the country as of the University. The enduring success of the Botanic Garden as a place of teaching and research is a testimony to its curators and gardeners, including the team met by The Prince of Wales, who are continuing the Garden's history of updating and adapting to scientific discovery over the centuries."

At the Conservatory His Royal Highness met Dr Chris Thorogood, Deputy Director and Head of Science, who explained the importance of two plants from the glasshouse collections: a carnivorous *Nepenthes* pitcher plant and a tropical ant plant, both of which feature prominently in the Garden's research and conservation work respectively.

At the end of the tour, His Royal Highness met two horticulture apprentices, Miss Laura Quinlan and Mr Will Blake, who presented His Royal Highness with two gifts developed in collaboration by the Botanic Garden: a bottle of Oxford Physic Gin and a new hybrid rose bred by Peter Beales Roses for the Garden's 400th anniversary. Much to the surprise and amusement of all those present, His Royal Highness then presented Professor Hiscock with a gift of Highgrove Organic Garden Botanical Gin.

The name of the anniversary rose will be announced by OBG and Peter Beales Roses on the day of the anniversary of the Botanic Garden on July 25th 2021 ahead of its official launch at the Chelsea Flower Show in May 2022 (deferred from the 2021 Show, which was cancelled). July 25th will also herald the start of a year of celebrations marking the



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foundation of the Botanic Garden on that day in 1621. Do sign up to our mailing list to find out more.

– ENDS –

A range of **high-resolution photography is available here:**

<https://tinyurl.com/OBG400th>

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