

NATIONAL TRUST FOR SCOTLAND MEDIA RELEASE

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Crathes Castle plants idea of exotic Scottish gardens flourishing in the future

Plants from the deserts and tropics of the world are being grown in harmony with native species at Crathes Castle Gardens, and gardeners are being encouraged to take inspiration and broaden their horizons by considering planting exotic species as climate change brings shifting weather patterns to the North East of Scotland.

At one time it would have been unimaginable that exotic plants like *Polylepis* from the Andes could take root and blossom in Scottish soil, particularly in Aberdeenshire which is known for its hard climate.

Chris Wardle (45) heads up the team responsible for caring for Crathes' four-acre walled garden where they successfully growing *Polylepis* along with *Agave* from the deserts of South America, a plant which is used to make tequila, and *Callistemon*, a shrub more commonly found in arid areas of South Australia, with other plants from deserts and dustbowls of the world.

All this in a garden that is located 20 miles inland between the Cairngorm mountain range and the North Sea with cold winds, high snowfall and low temperatures in winter and where in the summer the mercury can rise to 28C, similar to temperatures found in the South of England.

Crathes is managed by the National Trust for Scotland which partnered with the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) is producing the Gardening in the Global Greenhouse Report looking at the impact of climate change on gardens and the challenges and opportunities posed by increased rain, drought and sunshine. As part of this ground-breaking work, Crathes is giving the public an insight into its experiences of trialling more exotic plant types during a walk and tour of its garden on Saturday, July 22.

Head gardener Chris encourages gardeners to ditch pre-conceived ideas of what suits the Scottish garden and come along to see what's happening at Crathes, gain inspiration, ideas and enjoy a tour of what he says is a stunning garden. Chris says: "Crathes is known for pushing boundaries and over the past few years we have been trialling things outside that should not grow in a North East garden, but they do.

"The North East is regarded as a harder climate but here we are growing these plants, and we are looking to extend people's knowledge of what is possible to do in their garden. We want to extend the palate and thought process about the concept of gardening and educate people about climate shift and how gardeners can think differently about what they are doing in the future.

"This will be relevant to anyone interested in gardening and the environment and equally anyone wishing to see a beautiful garden which is a living work of art."

Chris has worked in horticulture for the over 20 years, joining the team at Crathes in 2000. When visitors seek tips on gardening, his main advice to them is encouraging them grow as many plants as they can, and develop their own style.

He adds: "Gardening is like art, it's very personal to each individual and you have to love what you are doing and enjoy it. I never say I have a particularly favourite plant, I tend to appreciate the beauty in whatever I am close to at the time."

The talk and tour 'Southern Hemisphere Plants for a North East Garden' is not just for eccentric gardeners but for anyone interested in nature and the environment as it offers an appreciation of Crathes and its walled garden which encompasses many different styles including sculpted topiary, soft herbaceous colours and modern exotic blooms and was developed in the Arts and Crafts style largely by General Sir James Burnett and his wife, Sybil.

The quirky, exotic and beautiful plants of the Southern Hemisphere will be the main focus of the tour which begins at 1pm on Saturday 22 July.

For more details visit <https://www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events/viewevent?EFID=519&ESRC=CMS>

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