

NATIONAL TRUST FOR SCOTLAND MEDIA RELEASE

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Celebrating Branklyn's blue poppies

The National Trust for Scotland's blue poppies at Branklyn Garden will soon be in bloom, and are the focus of its next themed celebration.

Following on from successful snowdrop and trout lily-themed events, Head Gardener Jim Jermyn is taking Branklyn Garden's annual Meconopsis day, and stretching it out into a celebration lasting almost 2 whole weeks.

Jim says:

"Branklyn Garden holds one of the UK's National Collections of Meconopsis and as such has a significant array of both species and cultivars, some of which can only be seen here, in these world-famous gardens in Perth.

"Although the words Himalayan Blue Poppy may conjure up some challenges, these plants are comparatively easy to grow in the northern counties of the UK."

The first Meconopsis flowers have appeared in the last week of April 2017 with more to follow in quick succession. The peak flowering period usually falls between the middle and end of May with the most popular cultivars such as 'Lingholm', 'Slieve Donard' and 'Huntfield' at their best.

Branklyn plays an important part in the story of the blue poppy in Britain, Jim explains:

"The history of this species as a cultivated plant in British gardens owes much to the pioneering work of Branklyn's founders, Dorothy and John Renton.

"They commenced work on the garden in the early 1920s just as the very first Himalayan Blue Poppy, *Meconopsis baileyi* was entering commerce from its introduction by Kingdon Ward from Tibet. A fine species and still worth of a place in any sheltered garden was grown from the outset here, enjoying a neutral to acid soil base. However, it was the introduction of Ludlow and Sherriff's now legendary Blue Poppy, *Meconopsis grandis* from Bhutan just before and after the end of the Second War that would launch the plant that now adorns this 2 acre Perthshire garden to world-wide fame.

“A number of recently-raised hybrids have been added to the collection to take the total number of accessions over the 50 mark! They range from the rather special cultivar ‘Dorothy Renton’ to a strong-growing variety, ‘Branklyn’ and a fine, pure white one, named ‘Marit’, originally found in Tromso, Norway.”

Branklyn Garden’s blue poppy celebration runs from 17 – 29 May. There will be regular tours and growing tips from the Trust’s resident experts.

The Terrace Café will also be serving coffee and cake.

Entry to the garden is free to National Trust for Scotland members, £6.50 per person for non-members and £4 for Scottish Rock Garden Club members.

Branklyn Garden is a haven of peace overlooking the Tay. It was developed by the Rentons with the help of seed collections from plant-hunters such as Forrest, Ludlow and Sherriff. Gardeners and botanists come from all over the world to see its outstanding collection of plants particularly rhododendrons, alpines, herbaceous and peat-garden plants.

