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NATIONAL TRUST FOR SCOTLAND AUDITS OVER 25,000 PLANTINGS IN FIRST YEAR OF PLANT LISTING PROJECT

- **Scotland's largest conservation charity discovers original Edward Atkinson Hornel planting during year one of plant listing project**
- **Activity is part of three-year project to inventory and record the plants in the National Trust for Scotland's gardens in order to better protect Scotland's rich horticultural heritage.**

The National Trust for Scotland is about to enter the second phase of its ambitious, three-year horticultural project to meticulously document the plants across its 39 gardens. Rooted in the Trust's vision to offer nature, beauty and heritage to everyone, the project to catalogue its plant collections will enable the Trust to better understand how they can be protected and also uncover the stories of how they came to be in the gardens.

Made possible by support received from the charity's members and supporters, the PLANTS project (Plant Listing at the National Trust for Scotland) celebrates its first anniversary boasting a total of 25,000 plantings audited. Nine of the Trust's 39 gardens have been visited during phase one, with the findings already uncovering some remarkable stories that help to piece together Scotland's ties to global history.

As Scotland's largest garden owner, estimated to be home to over 100,000 plants, the charity believes understanding the composition of its plant collections will significantly enhance its ability to manage the risks of plant disease, severe weather, storm damage, and the growing impact of the climate and biodiversity crisis. It will also enable the Trust to preserve rare species and historic cultivars through propagation.

In phase one of the project, the PLANTS team discovered two giant redwoods (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*) residing in southside Glasgow's Holmwood parkland, alongside a Himalayan deodar cedar (*Cedrus deodara*), nicely illustrating the diversity of geographies represented in the charity's gardens. The breadth of climates in Scotland allows for flora from across the world to flourish, as the team also audited a grouping of North American species, subalpine fir (*Abies lasiocarpa*) and mountain hemlock (*Tsuga mertensiana*), at Haddo House in Aberdeen, which nods to the 7th Earl of Aberdeen, John Hamilton-Gordon's, time as Governor General of Canada.

The West of Scotland is renowned for its range of thriving microclimates which enable unique plant life to flourish, with the regional team carrying out work at properties such

as Culzean Castle, Broughton House, Threave Garden and Holmwood House. As with Haddo House and the Earl of Aberdeen, Broughton House also showcases the links between former owners and the plants that still remain in the gardens today. The half-acre Kirkcudbright garden was developed by beloved Scottish artist Edward Atkinson Hornel. Known for his floral landscape paintings, Hornel bought the house next door to Broughton in order to extend his plot.

The PLANTS team discovered that some of Hornel's original planting has survived by cross referencing previous archive records with the age of the existing plants which came to be a match. This is also supported by Broughton House's archived letter from Hornel to a friend about how he was saddened to miss the first time the wisteria flowered as he was overseas. Wisteria is native to the east Asia, and it was Japan that most influenced Hornel's designs for his garden, as he had travelled there previously. Hornel and his sister Tizzy, fascinated by the Arts and Crafts movement, created a Japanese-style garden with stepping stones across a pond accompanied by a glasshouse of Hornel's own design and a variety of decorative trees.

The PLANTS project is led by Dr Anna Florence, National Trust for Scotland Curator of Plant Collections, and Dr Colin McDowall, PLANTS Project Manager, alongside a team of experts, and aims to identify and record the plants in the charity's 39 gardens. With the array of microclimates across Scotland and the scale and breadth of the Trust's garden spaces, from productive walled gardens to large estates, the team have relished the opportunity to showcase the rare and endangered plants and the countless stories of how they came to be there.

Dr Anna Florence, Curator of Plant Collections for the National Trust for Scotland, said: "We are thrilled to get ready for the second year of the three-year PLANTS project. Over the past 12 months, we've had some amazing findings during the first phase of the project. Our gardens are truly unique in that they are home to a plethora of rare and exotic plants. Many of these species of plants are becoming endangered as the global climate crisis worsens that is why the work that we have been doing is of the utmost importance to ensure these species aren't lost forever."

Stuart Brooks, Director of Conservation & Policy at the National Trust for Scotland, said: "The PLANTS project represents a major investment in managing and preserving our plant collections, helping us to plan for the future of our gardens and plant collections and enable them to flourish. It's also uncovering some fascinating stories.

"We have already made some incredible discoveries that are allowing us to reintroduce species of plants that our gardens were once home to. We understand the significance and heritage our gardens have but also recognise the importance of them to our visitors as a landmark of long-lasting memories made with friends and loved ones. This ambitious project will help us to understand exactly what can be found in our gardens, establish its horticultural importance, and provide the information we need to best look after them, so that many more people can make memories to last a lifetime.

“We are very grateful to our members, supporters and our PLANTS team that have made the intensive project not only possible but a great success during its first phase.”

The PLANTS team will continue to categorise gardens throughout 2023 and will publish ongoing findings that confirm the fascinating stories of the vision and determination of the horticulturists and plant collectors who originally designed and cared for its iconic gardens. This year the project will expand to Trust gardens across Edinburgh and the east, as the PLANTS team eagerly prepare to piece together the jigsaw puzzle of Scotland’s horticultural heritage.

The PLANTS project is one of many initiatives led by the Trust as part of its ten-year strategy, *Nature, Beauty & Heritage for Everyone*, with a mission to conserve Scotland’s heritage and the stories that each of its gardens hold. The first phase of PLANTS has already significantly aided the Trust in its understanding of the heritage of its gardens and the steps needed to take place to ensure the prosperity of each.

For more information on the National Trust for Scotland’s PLANTS project, please visit: www.nts.org.uk.

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Notes to editors

About the National Trust for Scotland

Established in 1931, the National Trust for Scotland is Scotland’s largest conservation charity and cares for, shares and speaks up for Scotland’s magnificent heritage.

Over the last 90 years the Trust has pioneered public access to and shared ownership of some of the most magnificent buildings, collections and landscapes in Scotland. It cares for more than 100 sites, from ancient houses to battlefields, castles, mills, gardens, coastlines, islands, mountain ranges and the plants and animals which depend upon them.

In March 2022, the National Trust for Scotland launched *Nature, Beauty & Heritage for Everyone*, its ten-year strategy which sets out the ambitions of the charity over the coming decade. From speaking up for Scotland’s heritage which doesn’t have a voice, to improving the lives and wellbeing of people across the country, and responding to the climate and biodiversity crisis, the Trust will build on its work in recent years to grow its impact and conserve and restore more of Scotland’s heritage, as it moves towards its centenary in 2031.

Scotland’s largest membership organisation, the National Trust for Scotland relies on the support of its members and donors to carry out its important work.

For more information on the National Trust for Scotland visit www.nts.org.uk.

The National Trust for Scotland is a charity registered in Scotland, Charity Number SC 007410.