

21 March 2024

## **NATIONAL TRUST FOR SCOTLAND ENTERS FINAL YEAR OF AMBITIOUS PLANT DISCOVERY PROJECT**

- **Over 61,000 plants audited in the PLANTS project across the conservation charity's 39 gardens notably including a 17<sup>th</sup> century holly tree and a Scarlet Fire rose planted in 1921**

The National Trust for Scotland is set to enter the third and final year of its ambitious project to meticulously document an estimated 100,000 plants across its 39 major gardens.

Auditing 61,938 plantings across Scotland so far, the extensive process has resulted in remarkable findings that unravel fascinating stories from the past, highlighting endangered species of plants and enabling the country's largest conservation charity to form a plan to further protect them for decades to come.

As Scotland's largest garden owner, estimated to be home to over 100,000 plants, the charity has made significant progress on the PLANTS (Plant Listing at the National Trust for Scotland) project, identifying over 60,000 plantings since work began in 2022.

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. For each of the thousands of plants examined so far, the PLANTS team have recorded the genus, species or cultivar of the planting to match previous archived records.

By cataloguing the collection of plants at this stage, the Trust is able to understand the composition of the collection so that in years to come, the team is able to identify any vulnerabilities – particularly with regards to climate change, plant disease or biodiversity crisis.

To date, there have been discoveries of endangered plants that need the appropriate action taken to enable the plants to flourish without the risk of plant disease. Inverewe Garden in the Scottish Highlands is home to an original plant that was thought to be lost, *Primula* 'Inverewe'. A hybrid between two Candelabra *Primulas*, the vibrant flower does not set seed and can only be propagated, a process of producing plants from a single parent plant. To preserve the unique plant and encourage the longevity of the cultivar, the *Primula* 'Inverewe' is set for propagation as a result of the PLANTS project.

With places spread across the country, the team have a wide range to cover as they now look

towards the completion of the extensive audit. They will be visiting the likes of Brodie Castle, a garden known for its massive collection of daffodils and home to over 100 of the original cultivars planted by Major Ian Brodie, the 24<sup>th</sup> Laird of Brodie, in the early 1900s.

Venturing further in the Scottish Highlands to complete the recording of the plant collections of the richly biodiverse, and deemed the 'impossible garden', Inverewe Garden, designed by Osgood Mackenzie. His life long project that started with only two dwarf willows is now home to plantlife from across the world including: California Redwoods, rare Wollemi Pines, Himalayan Blue Poppies and a variety of rhododendrons from China, Nepal and India.

Then it's onwards to the Isle of Arran to confirm the condition of Brodick Castle's rhododendron collection, which was once filled with over 360 different species of rhododendron and home to the Horlick Collection gifted to the Trust by Sir James Horlick in 1958. Finally, they will travel eastward to Hill of Tarvit and Kellie Castle & Garden.

**Dr Anna Florence, Curator of Plant Collections for the National Trust for Scotland, said:** "Now in the final year of the PLANTS project, it's remarkable to look back and see the amazing stories we've unearthed. From finding original plantings from Scottish artist Edward Atkinson Hornel's Japanese inspired garden at Broughton House, all the way to one of the oldest holly trees in Scotland at Castle Fraser. We're not sure of its exact age but it features in a painting that helps us to date it as a mature tree before 1842. We're sure there will be more fascinating links for us to uncover as we begin this year's season of auditing and I'd like to thank our team and loyal volunteers for helping up protect the nature, beauty and heritage for everyone to admire for years to come."

**Stuart Brooks, Director of Conservation & Policy at the National Trust for Scotland, said:** "The PLANTS project is pivotal to the Trust's commitment to protecting our gardens' rich biodiversity, heritage and the stories of those who once walked those same grounds. This ambitious, complex and demanding project done by the PLANTS team to document all our plants means that we can plan ahead and help the nature, beauty and heritage across our gardens to thrive, navigating complex issues such as climate change. We are grateful to all our members and supporters whose generosity makes it possible for our charity to plan and undertake essential projects such as this one, and to protect Scotland's special places and heritage for future generations."

For more information on the National Trust for Scotland's PLANTS project, please visit: [www.nts.org.uk](http://www.nts.org.uk).

**ENDS**

#### **Notes to editors**

For more information, imagery or interview requests please contact Muckle Media on [nts@mucklemedia.co.uk](mailto:nts@mucklemedia.co.uk) or call 0131 228 9713.

### 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](http://www.nts.org.uk).

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