

9 June 2025

## **THREAVE SCHOOL CELEBRATES 65 YEARS OF GROWING THE NATION'S GREAT GARDENERS**

The Threave School of Heritage Gardening is celebrating its 65th anniversary, and more than six decades of training horticultural experts who have gone on to shape many of the country's finest gardens.

Located in Castle Douglas, Dumfries & Galloway, and managed by the National Trust for Scotland, the Threave School is one of only a few centres of horticultural education in the UK to offer a firm grounding in both the theory and practice of gardening.

Known for its thorough training, including rigorous plant identification tests, alumni now tend gardens across Scotland and beyond, working at the conservation charity's other properties and other prestigious gardens like Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, Logan and Benmore, Dunvegan Castle, the Eden Project, Alnwick Garden, Windsor Great Park, Cambridge Botanic Garden, and Kew Gardens.

To commemorate this milestone, the Trust is hosting an anniversary celebration at Threave Garden on Saturday 26 July. Alumni, former staff, and supporters are welcome to join the event at the Stables Courtyard in Threave House from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Gareth Clingan, the Trust's Operations Manager at Threave Garden & Nature Reserve, said: "The School of Heritage Gardening is unique in Scotland for its combination of theoretical and practical instruction. Many former students speak of the stress of the fortnightly ident tests, but what a difference they made in their practical work in the garden. And one of the wonderful things about Threave is that it's tended by the students, their teachers, and volunteers, so they have a lot of involvement in its design and can take responsibility for a well-visited and well-loved working garden while they're studying.

"We're looking forward to welcoming former students and staff to attend the celebrations on 26 July and hope that we can gather people from across the country to celebrate Threave Garden, the school, and its great legacy."

Michael Lawrie, the Trust's Head Gardener for Dumfries & Galloway and Head of the Threave School of Heritage Gardening, said: "I've been involved in training students for the last 21 years, starting as a Garden Instructor, then as Assistant Head Gardener, and in 2016 taking overall responsibility for the garden and School. In my time, I've seen over 120 students from all around the world, from Japan and South Africa to Spain and the US, to name a few. They have all achieved the Threave Certificate, which is internationally recognised throughout the horticulture industry, as well as obtaining the RHS practical level 2 or 3 qualifications.

"It's amazing seeing the transformation from the start of their one-year course to the end, where their confidence, passion, and knowledge has excelled and led them onto the next step in their horticultural pathway, whether it be full time employment or continuing their education.

"The reunion on 26 July will celebrate what Threave has given us all in our careers, provide the chance to share memories, and allow us to meet colleagues all with one thing in common - the love and passion for Threave."

One of the school's former students, Brian Stuart, has also collated a book to commemorate this anniversary. 'The History of Threave School of Gardening 1960-2025' records the full story of the school for the first time thanks to information provided by three of its principals, Bill Hean, Trevor Jones, and Michael Lawrie, and with additional memories from some alumni. This special historic record will be available at the anniversary, with digital copies available for those who cannot attend.

To RSVP to the anniversary event, please email [threave@nts.org.uk](mailto:threave@nts.org.uk).

## **ENDS**

### **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.