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A glorious summer at Kew Gardens

For the summer season the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (RBG Kew) will be filled with festive horticultural plantings, stunning art and sculpture installations and fascinating exhibitions celebrating Kew's pivotal role as a world-leader in horticulture, plant science and conservation, now and for the next 250 years.

Nigel Taylor, Curator of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew says "Our 250th celebrations are well under way and there is a lot on offer at Kew this summer; from enjoying the beauty of the Gardens in their full bloom, to taking in an inspiring exhibition, or exploring behind the scenes on an all access tour. There's never been a better time to visit Kew!"

More than just a garden.....

Greeting visitors at the Victoria Plaza entrance a global map installation celebrates the reach of RBG Kew across the world, highlighting its global conservation work. At RBG Kew there are over 200 scientists working with more than 800 partner organisations in over 100 countries. Since its beginnings 250 years ago Kew has always had an international presence, collecting and conserving plants; from the plant hunting days of Joseph Banks, Darwin and Livingstone to the modern day seed collectors from Kew's Millennium Seed Bank partnership which safeguards over 1.5 billion seeds from 10 % of the world's 300,000 wild flowering plant species. Two new beds surrounding the map will be filled with a global floral spectacular of colourful plants from families and genera representing the continents of the world, such as *Agapanthus* from South Africa, *Dahlia* from Mexico and *Humulus* (golden hops) from Europe.

Celebrate with roses.....

Kew is working with David Austin Roses to re-plant the rose garden behind the Palm House to its original design by William Nesfield. Dating back to 1848, RBG Kew's horticultural experts are excited about bringing a part of Kew's rich landscape heritage back to life. Nesfield was one of the famous landscapers whose influence on Kew shaped how the Gardens look today. The new rose garden will feature 'Rosa' Kew Gardens, a celebratory rose bred for Kew's 250th anniversary which is thornless with eye-catching white-and-yellow flowers which are produced almost continuously from early summer through to the end of the season. This rose will be for sale in the Kew Gardens' shop from October.

Enjoy wildflowers and buzzing bees....

From late May the beauty of UK native flowers is revealed at the Main Gate, highlighting the importance of plant conservation on our own doorstep. The display will include British orchids and other wildflowers such as the Thames Valley native – wild clary (*Salvia verbenaca*). The orchids will be grown in a similar habitat to the wild. Two bee hives in the wild flower display and a bee discovery centre in Climbers & Creepers will help visitors learn more about the important role of bees in the natural environment. These are sponsored by Jordans cereals who have partnered with RBG Kew to launch *The Big Buzz*, a national campaign to increase bee-friendly habitats in the UK.

Investigate Seeds...

4 April – 13 September, Nash Conservatory

<http://250.kew.org/CelebrateAtKewGardens/ExhibitionsAndAttractions/SeedWalkandExhibition/index.htm>

Kew's Millennium Seed Bank (MSB) partnership is celebrated with *Banking on Life*. The exhibition tells the story of the first 10 years of Kew's MSB partnership with a mix of stunning art installations by sculptor Tony Gibas and visual artist Rob Kessler plus interactive displays, photography and inspiring stories. It promises to be one of the highlights of Kew's 250th anniversary year – also the year in which Kew's MSB partnership smashes its target of collecting and banking seeds from 10 per cent (c 30,000 species) of the world's wild flowering plant species. www.kew.org/msbp
For more information see www.kew.org/press/MSBexhibition

Walk among seeds...

4 April into 2010

<http://250.kew.org/CelebrateAtKewGardens/ExhibitionsAndAttractions/SeedWalkandExhibition/index.htm>

Visual artist Tom Hare, known for his greenwood woven willow sculptures, is creating a 'Seed Walk' of outsize seed sculptures lining the mini-Broadwalk at Main Gate (outside the Nash Conservatory). Celebrating Kew's Millennium Seed Bank partnership, seeds featured include coco de mer, a conker and a lotus seed head. The huge sculptures up to four metres high and five metres wide and set against tropical display beds planted specially for the anniversary. Of the ten sculptures commissioned, six are in place – star anise, horse chestnut, poppies, devil's claw, *Banksia* and lotus. The remaining four – honesty, *Sophora*, sycamore and coco de mer – are being crafted on site over the summer. Workshops for the later installations give visitors the chance to help weave the sculptures. For more information see www.kew.org/press/MSBexhibition

Explore behind the scenes...

Sign up for special 250th anniversary tours with Kew's volunteer guides. Throughout the anniversary year an exciting programme of tours give visitors the unique opportunity to see the vital work that goes on behind-the-scenes. See the busy plant nursery in the Melon Yard and explore the high-tech laboratories of the Jodrell, home to cutting edge plant science and freezers holding plant DNA. Take in the vast collections of plant specimens, illustrations and historic documents and letters in the Herbarium, Library, Arts and Archives. Investigate the Economic Botany collection – the largest of its kind in the world – and a tangible record of Kew's 250 years of history. For more details see www.kew.org/education/toursfestival

Taking the 250th beyond Kew's walls...

RBG Kew takes its 250th anniversary celebrations beyond its walls with a public lecture series at some of the UK's most distinguished institutions. Join a debate at The British Museum (6 July, 6.30pm) investigating the tensions between the exploitation of landscapes for human benefit and the preservation of those same landscapes. The panel includes economist Sir Nicholas Stern, international journalist and author Tahmima Anam and Kew's Head of Seed Conservation, Paul Smith. Explore the relationship between Joseph Banks and Benjamin Franklin at the British Library, or learn about the inspiring nature plants has had on Art at the V & A (11 September, 7pm). For more information on these and other talks see www.kew.org/events/250-lectures.html

Learn about the Power of Plants....

Now until 26 July, The Shirley Sherwood Gallery of Botanical Art

RBG Kew's 200,000 strong botanical art collection includes representations of hundreds of plants of economic value from all over the world. *The Power of Plants* exhibition brings together historic and contemporary paintings from this collection to celebrate plants that are essential to human well-being for health, food and textiles. Paintings by artists such as Ferdinand Bauer, Georg Dionysius Ehret and Marianne North feature, as well as illustrations from the 'Company School', the often unnamed Indian artists commissioned by the merchants and officials of the East India Company. Visitors can also see some of the plants featured in the paintings in the summer bedding display in the Palm House Parterre. RBG Kew's volunteer guides are hosting free hour's tour

celebrating *The Power of Plants*. For more information see www.kew.org/events/shirley-sherwood-gallery/currentexhibitions.html

Discover Gingers ...

Now until 26 July, The Shirley Sherwood Gallery of Botanical Art

In Search of Gingers is a stimulating exhibition of ginger art works by Sandy Ross Sykes in galleries three and four of The Shirley Sherwood Gallery. Sykes completed her Masters at the Royal College of Art, where she specialised in painting the *Zingiberaceae* family (gingers.) There are currently over 1,200 known varieties of *Zingiberaceae* species in South East Asia. By exhibiting her work, Sykes aims to raise public awareness of the species, and so help safeguard their natural habitats. Illegal logging, pollution, and urbanisation are three of the main problems facing this fascinating and economically significant family of plants.

Delve Down Under...

Now until 8 August 2009, The Shirley Sherwood Gallery of Botanical Art

Discover exceptional Australian and New Zealand botanical artists from The Shirley Sherwood Collection. The paintings featured range from flower studies and still lifes to detailed botanical illustrations of native plants, showing a great range of styles and techniques. Studies are in watercolour on paper or vellum, gouache, acrylic or coloured pencil and copper plate etching. Most of the work has been executed in Australia or New Zealand but many of the artists are widely travelled and have lived or taught in Europe and elsewhere. For more information see www.kew.org/events/shirley-sherwood-gallery/currentexhibitions.html

Investigate the evolution of plants...

August – December, The Shirley Sherwood Gallery of Botanical Art

Art meets science in 'The Art of Plant Evolution' (August – December) an exhibition of botanical paintings from The Shirley Sherwood Collection, arranged in the latest evolutionary sequence, determined by recent DNA analysis. Not only is botanical art undergoing a renaissance today but recent genetic discoveries have changed the nomenclature and evolutionary sequence of many plants during the last ten years. The paintings will display a sampling of the plant world from fungi to daisies, including algae, mosses, ferns, conifers and flowering plants. The 136 paintings by 84 artists will cover 50 orders of plants in 118 families for a total of 133 species, providing a sweeping overview of the evolution of plants on earth. It will be a celebration for Charles Darwin's 200th birthday and the 150th anniversary of *On the Origin of the Species*. For more information see <http://www.kew.org/events/shirley-sherwood-gallery/futureexhibitions.html>

Admire the beauty of gardens through the lens...

22 May to end September 2009

See the winning entries in the third International Garden Photographer of the Year competition on display in an outdoor exhibition located near the Pavilion Restaurant. Visitors will be able to view the very best photographs in the categories Wildlife in the Garden, Plant Portraits, Garden Views, People in the Garden, The Edible Garden, Trees and World Botanic Gardens – a category introduced for 2009 to mark RBG Kew's 250th anniversary. Go to www.kew.org/galpa for more details.

Get into the swing of summer...

7 – 11 July

From *Night Fever* to *Dancing Queen*, Kew Gardens' July open-air concert series 'Summer Swing' promises to be one of London's best nights out. Set on the lawn in front of the Victorian Temperate House, there is an all-singing and all-dancing line up for Kew's 250th anniversary year, enhanced by a live big-screen relay and sizzling firework finale each night. Jools Holland, returns for his annual two-night stint at Kew Gardens

(Tuesday 7 and Saturday 11). Sing along to ABBA classics with Björn Again and dance away to Bee Gees tribute act Jives Talking (Wednesday 8). Groove it into the 60s with The Bootleg Beatles and Counterfeit Stones (Thursday 9). Friday (10) sees the return of the fiery flamenco rock supremos, The Gipsy Kings. Swing sponsor, Wines of South Africa, will be offering concert-goers the chance to sample a wide range of fabulous wines from the Cape. For more details see www.kew.org/swing

An Indian summer

Now until 28 September

In a unique collaboration, the British Museum and RBG Kew, create an Indian-themed landscape on the Museum's forecourt. The Landscape takes visitors on a journey spanning the mountainous environment of the Himalayas, represented by a dramatic rock garden; through temperate woodland and ending with a sub-tropical zone centred on a pool filled with lotus flowers (*Nelumbo*). The Landscape highlights the significance of plants used in Indian culture – as food, medicine and in trade, and the way plants such as chilli (native to South America) have travelled and become completely indigenous. Indian Landscape follows on from the successful China Landscape created in 2008, and is the second of five planned partnerships. The British Museum also celebrates a milestone this year, as it first opened its doors 250 years ago. British Museum Forecourt, Admission free, Sponsored by HSBC.

Buy Royal Souvenirs....

RBG Kew is partnering with both the Royal Mint and The Royal Mail to produce special, limited edition commemorative souvenirs for the 250th anniversary - a celebration of Kew's rich heritage for all to enjoy.

The Royal Mint has produced a commemorative 50p coin. The gold and silver versions were launched on 11 May, while the cupro-nickel version is already on sale in the Kew Gardens shop. The coin's design features an image synonymous with Kew Gardens, the iconic Pagoda, surrounded by a pattern of intertwining plants. The Pagoda was completed in 1762 as a surprise for Princess Augusta, the mother of George III, and was one of several buildings designed by Sir William Chambers, Princess Augusta's official architect, to ornament the estate. The coin will also appear in general circulation in the nation's change later this year. For more information www.royalmint.com

The Royal Mail celebrates RBG Kew's anniversary with a unique four-stamp miniature sheet featuring landmarks representative of RBG Kew – the historic Palm House, stunning Pagoda, tranquil Sackler Crossing and innovative Millennium Seed Bank. These were launched on 19 May along with a set of ten stamps featuring native endangered plants. The stamps are decorated with botanical illustrations of each plant – six of which are taken from RBG Kew's 200,000 strong illustration collection.

While threatened all of these plants have recently had conservation successes, such as the lady slipper orchid (*Cypripedium calceolus*), one of the UK's rarest orchids. RBG Kew botanists (in collaboration with English Nature) reintroduced seedlings into the wild and the first flowering was reported in 2000. For more information www.royalmail.com/plants

Ends

Notes to Editors:

For more details please contact Tarryn Barrowman, Bryony Phillips or Bronwyn Friedlander in RBG Kew press office, telephone 020 8332 5607 or e-mail pr@kew.org .

Images are available at www.kew.org/press/images please contact the press office for the username and password.

Opening hours until 29 August:

Monday - Friday: 9.30am – 6.30pm. Glasshouses, Galleries and the Xstrata Treetop Walkway close at 5.30pm. *Weekends:* 9.30am – 7.30pm. Glasshouses and Galleries close at 5.30. Xstrata Treetop Walkway closes at 6.30pm

Admission: Adults £13, Concessions £11, FREE for children under 17 (accompanied by an adult)

Kew Rose

For more information about the Kew rose please contact Mike Marriot at David Austin roses on 01902 376316 and michaelm@davidaustinroses.co.uk

Tours

Power of Plants Tours

When: Daily at 12 noon

Where: Leave from the guides' desk at the Victoria Plaza, at Victoria Gate.

Price: Free

Behind the scenes tours

- **The Alpine Collection (April/May):**

When: Tuesdays and Thursdays at 1.30pm

Where: Tours start in front of the Plants + People Exhibition.

What: Includes the Rock Garden, the Davies Alpine House and behind-the-scenes into the 'Melon Yard'

- **Jodrell Laboratory (June/July)**

When: Wednesdays at 11.30am and 2.30pm

Where: Tours start in front of the Plants + People Exhibition.

What: Includes the order beds and behind-the-scenes in the Jodrell Laboratory, to see the mycology collection, various laboratories where Kew scientific work is undertaken and the plant DNA bank.

- **Herbarium, Library, Art & Archives (August /September)**

When: Wednesdays at 11am and 2pm

Where: Tours start in front of the Nash Conservatory

What: Visit Kew's Herbarium which houses approximately 7 million herbarium specimens, 300,000 books, 200,000 art works and 7 million archival items.

- **Economic Botany Collection (October/November)**

When: Wednesdays at 11.30am and 2.00pm

Where: Tours start in front of the Nash Conservatory

What: Explore the largest collection of its kind in the world, filled with 90,000 plant raw materials and artefacts, demonstrating the fundamental role of plants in daily life.

Price: Tours cost £5 per person and last 1½hrs.

Booking: Places are limited; pre-booking essential - phone 020 8332 5604 or email tours@kew.org

More information: www.kew.org/education/toursfestival.html

Kew's 250th lecture series

For more details on the prices, booking and content of each lecture please go to www.kew.org/events/250-lectures.html

Summer Swing

Further information and photos are available from Louise Burton – 01825 731 853 louise@makeithappen-events.co.uk

When: Gates open 6.30pm and concerts start 7.30pm approx.

Firework finale at approx 10.15 pm.

Price: Tickets from £30. Group discounts available on certain shows

Booking: www.kew.org/swing or phone See Tickets on 0871 231 0834 (24hrs)

Information: No seating is provided, so bring blankets, folding chairs and picnics.

India Landscape Garden

Images of featured plants are available to download from www.kew.org/press/images

Please contact the RBG Kew press office for the username and password.

For more details please contact Hannah Boulton at the British Museum on

hboulton@britishmuseum.org or 020 7323 8522 or Katie McCrory at Brunswick arts on britishmuseum@brunswickgroup.com or 020 7936 1290

Cruickshank on Kew

The history of RBG Kew is traced in a special programme by presenter Dan Cruickshank, *Cruickshank on Kew: The Garden That Changed the World* was screened on BBC TWO on 28 April and was repeated on 6 May. In RBG Kew's 250th anniversary year, Cruickshank combs the Gardens and digs through the archives to unearth some of the surprising stories that shaped the UNESCO World Heritage Site. Cruickshank's travels take him from the royal gardens to the corridors of power and the outposts of Empire as he pieces together Kew's story, ending with a visit to Kew's Millennium Seed Bank partnership. His globetrotting journey uncovers tales of bravery, high adventure, passion and drama. Download and watch it today on BBC's iPlayer.

For more information, images please contact Jenny Walford at the BBC Press Office on

jenny.walford@bbc.co.uk or 029 2032 2373

Royal Mail

For more information or images on the Kew Gardens and the 'endangered species' stamps please contact Mark Barber at Eulogy at 020 7927 9999 or stamps@eulogy.co.uk. Visit www.royalmail.com/plants for further information and details of how to place an online order.

The Royal Mint

For more information and images of the limited edition gold, silver and cupro-nickel 50p commemorative coins please contact the Royal Mint Press Office on 0117 9227799 or email elaine.teh@uk.grayling.com

Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

In 1759 Princess Augusta, mother of King George III, started an ambitious nine-acre physic garden around Kew Palace. Every generation has added to the charms and curiosities of Kew, now a major international visitor attraction with its 132 hectares of landscaped gardens, and its country garden, Wakehurst Place attracting nearly two million visitors per year. Kew is a UNESCO-inscribed World Heritage Site and houses over 40 listed buildings and other structures including the Palm House, Temperate House, Orangery and Pagoda as well as two ancient monuments, Queen Charlotte's Cottage and Kew Palace. RBG Kew is a world famous scientific organisation, internationally respected for its outstanding living collection of plants and world-class herbarium as well as its scientific expertise in plant diversity, conservation and sustainable development in the UK and around the world. By 2010, RBG Kew and its partners in the Millennium Seed Bank Partnership will have collected and conserved seed from 10 per cent of the world's wild flowering plant species (c.30,000 species). The aim is to conserve 25 per cent by 2020; however the project currently has no secured funding post 2010. Funds are being actively sought in order to continue to develop this vital work. For further information please visit www.kew.org/msbp.