Tell us about your job
UK Flora Collections Assistant.

Why is science important in your career?
Science is everything! How amazing is it that we can extend the life of a seed potentially for hundreds of years so it can be used for research or conservation?! It is great to know that my work is expanding our knowledge of seed storage and germination and directly contributing to plant conservation.

What is your average work day like?
A working day can vary enormously, from trying to germinate seeds in the lab, to snorkelling in a loch, collecting seeds from an aquatic plant. I spend a lot of my time in the labs performing germination tests to check the seeds. I spend several weeks out in the field either collecting seed or training volunteers.

Did you go to university? If so, what did you study? If not, what did you do after leaving school?
I did a BA in Philosophy and Language Studies.
I knew that I needed a better grounding in science to be able to apply for the jobs that I really wanted and applied to do an MSc in 2014.

What do you most enjoy about your job?
I love the mix of lab, field and project work. It’s fantastic to be working with some of the most threatened plants and to be conserving these species for the future. I’m probably the first person to ever see some of these species germinate!
What sort of personality traits do you have that help you in your career?

I have always been a problem solver which is perfect for this job. Each collection in the bank has its own traits and history and brings its own challenges. Working out in the field is fantastic but also hard work and definitely requires a flexible and positive attitude.

What helped you get your role at Kew?

The job description for this role was quite unusual, requiring field, lab and project experience – it fitted my unusual range of experience perfectly! Most importantly, it was a mix of experience from previous work and volunteering; my MSC qualification with relevant dissertation; and lots of enthusiasm.

What advice would you give to someone considering a career like yours?

I think that it’s important to remember that you don’t necessarily have to take the most obvious or quickest route. Don’t worry if you take a detour or don’t get it right first time. Do things you enjoy, try new things and keep an open mind about where you are going. I had no idea this job existed before I saw the job advertised so you don’t always need to know exactly where you are going when you set out.

What do you want people to know about your work?

We do more than just conserve the seeds here – we also make seeds, plants and data available for research and we work with organisations across the UK to help them conserve and restore species and habitats using our expertise, facilities and technology.

The Millennium Seed Bank currently conserves 98% of UK flora species

Kew is more than just horticulture! In fact, we have more scientists than horticulturalists working here!

Want a career that grows?

Build your skills in science, technology, engineering, art and maths to give yourself a chance to blossom in a career like one of these varied and exciting jobs at Kew.

You could make a real difference to the world.

For further information: www.kew.org