

The University of Oxford

118

Botanic Garden & Arboretum

Friends'
newsletter



Autumn 2024



From the Editor

By Chris Thorogood

Do check our What's On page for further information



The OBG team visiting Bristol Botanic Garden
Inset: The cactus collection at Bristol Botanic Garden

Cover image: *Aeginetia indica* in flower at OBG

At the time of writing, the River Cherwell has just breached its banks for the second time this year, underlining the need for OBGa to plan for an uncertain future. Indeed climate change is something we consider carefully when planting across our sites: new beds at the Botanic Garden are likely to endure periodic flooding and drought; what new trees at the Arboretum may endure in centuries to come is, of course, far less clear.

Collaboration emerges as a prominent theme in this edition of the newsletter. Botanic gardens are a network: we work collaboratively at a national and an international level. We were delighted to visit our colleagues at Bristol Botanic Garden this summer where we exchanged plants, seeds and ideas; we were happy to be joined by our visiting apprentices from Bonn Botanic

Gardens. Members of the OBG team also visited Kew to share knowledge on orchid care specifically. At the end of May we were visited by Eugene Yamada, owner of the Barakura English Garden in Japan, along with members of his family and staff, as Simon Hiscock discusses on the facing page. Later in the summer we were pleased to announce the launch of our Community for the Conservation and Research of *Rafflesia* (CCRR) which was funded by the University's Knowledge Exchange Seed Fund. The CCRR comprises academic biologists, foresters, researchers and community practitioners around the world who work on *Rafflesia* (the world's largest flowers). Its aim is to understand and conserve the world's largest flowers by building an international 'community of purpose' which can develop, share and deploy best practice.

Education and engagement make up one of OBGa's core strategic aims. In July we held a public engagement event in collaboration with Oxford University Museum of Natural History called Water and Wildlife Discovery Day. Over 1,000 people attended the event to test water quality and identify plants and invertebrates. Then in August we were pleased to host the Botanical University Challenge (BUC). This annual event unites students from across the UK and Ireland for a University Challenge-inspired competition that celebrates their passion for plants. Thanks to Lauren Baker for coordinating both these successful events. At the Arboretum, Catherine Vivian and Tegan Bennett led a Friends-funded programme of activity designed to increase and diversify our audience. Activities included wood-work, such as making coat hooks, and tree-themed crafts.

Meanwhile Rodger Caseby has been working on an exciting new 'Agile Initiative' responding to specific environmental policy-related questions with solution-focused research, as he describes on p. 11. After months of planning, our new Public Education Programme has just been launched. Popular courses such as forest bathing, yoga and aromatherapy meditation will continue, alongside new activities including an ethnobotanical tour, carnivorous plant care course and a tour of the Literary Garden. Online Autumn Science Lectures are fast approaching, and hard on their heels, our Winter Lectures; once again, these will be held in the Oxford University Museum of Natural History, following your overwhelmingly positive feedback.

Contents

- From the Editor..... 2
- From the Director..... 3
- News from the Garden 4
- News from the Glasshouses..... 6
- News from the Arboretum 8
- News from the Education Team...10
- Friends' Section
- News.....13
- Events..... 14
- The Danby Patrons' Group.....15
- The Bobarts Patrons' Group..... 16



A delegation from the Barakura English Garden in Japan with the Director and Deputy Director

From the Director

By **Simon Hiscock**

Attending the first day (press day) of the RHS Chelsea Flower Show is always a thrill and walking around the show back in May, I was struck by the number of gardens, both large and small, and other exhibits with the theme of resilience to climate change running through them. In particular, the 'Flood Resilience Garden', by Naomi Slade and Ed Barsley caught my attention and took my thoughts back to January, when much of the Lower Garden, including the Merton Borders were flooded. This prolonged period of flooding, not so long after the last major flood in winter 2020/21, appears to have had a profound effect on the species composition of the Merton Borders, which this year became a mass of golden rod, Michaelmas daisies and native thistles at the expense of the more attractive 'prairie' flowers. These are not the Merton Borders that we have known in the past, so it is time to think seriously about the future of this region of the Garden given that extreme weather events are becoming more frequent.

After receiving a special award at Chelsea for their Barakura English Garden in Japan, owners Eugene and Kay Yamada visited OBG with a group of their students. Last year, Mark Brent and Ben Jones gave lectures online and in person (Mark) to their Garden School students as part of the annual Barakura Garden Festival (both gave in-person lectures in June this year - by popular demand). As part of the Yamadas' visit we discussed future collaborations, especially in plant conservation linked to OBG's 'Japan Project' with the Botanical Gardens of Toyama. The Yamadas are famous gardeners in Japan who are known to the Imperial Family. I was therefore delighted to receive an invitation to attend a small

lunch for the Emperor and Empress when they visited Oxford as part of their official Royal Visit to the UK in late June. The lunch, hosted by the Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor in the Divinity School preceded the conferral of an Honorary degree to Empress Masako (a former student of Balliol); Emperor Naruhito, is a former student of Merton, which they visited along with Balliol during their day in Oxford. Unfortunately, there was not time for them to include Mr Yamada's suggestion of a visit to the Botanic Garden.

Earlier in June, a small group of us from OBG attended the opening night and private view of an exhibition of the Florilegium of Mary Somerset, first Duchess of Beaufort, at Badminton. As part of our renewed collaboration with Badminton, PhD student India Cole and I had facilitated the digitisation of the early 18th-century Florilegium by the Bodleian. Around 40 life-sized prints of digitised images formed the basis of the exhibition, which included the rarely seen original Florilegium. The

evening ended with a lavish dinner hosted by the Duke and Duchess - a truly special event.

As we plan for this year's Christmas Fair, which will be the biggest yet with two marquees, I wanted to let you know that there will be a new addition to our 'Physic range' of products - an exclusive OBG perfume created by innovative perfumier Sarah McCartney. Our aim is to launch this in time for the Fair. Our other 'Physic' products, including Physic Gin, Physic Rose and Rose soap, continue to be best sellers along with Harcourt Honey in our shop, income from which this year has surpassed all previous years and is up c.50% on last year. This success lies partly in the sales of our limited edition Black Pine whisky, an uninterrupted supply of Physic Gin and excellent sales over Christmas 2023, especially at the Christmas Fair.

Finally, I would like to say how sorry I am that after five years at OBG, Mark Brent has decided to move on to pastures new in Scotland. As Curator and Head of Horticulture, Mark has been a very loyal and dedicated employee who has helped steer the Garden through some challenging recent times. We thank him for all his hard work and wish him well for the future.



News from the Garden

By Mark Brent

A particular challenge in the Botanic Garden has been what was described by a meteorologist on BBC Radio 4 as a 'traditional British summer', with unpredictable rainfall and temperatures. Many of our plants bloomed much later as a result and fruiting among crops has been variable. Autumn arrived early in the Garden: the katsura tree turned colour early at the end of August and its distinctive scent of caramel was particularly noticeable early in the mornings. Our newer team members have settled in well but small things such as

their surprise at the scent of the katsura are a reminder that there is still much to learn about the nature of our Garden.

Last autumn we committed to a collaboration with John Letts to establish some small trial beds of heritage grain in the Lower Garden. I have to confess it was a marginal decision to squeeze this into our autumn work program but the results have proven it to be worthwhile. The diversity of ancient and heritage grain species has provided an interesting new feature that connects well with the adjacent 'Plants that Changed the World'



Ramonda myconi



Luisa Schlupper and Julian Hoppe taking part in the Bonn Botanic Garden exchange, photographed in OBG's waterlily pool

display. It has also given us an opportunity to give a public forum to new techniques such as regenerative soil cultivation which is increasingly being used locally in agriculture. Horticulturist H el ene Tronc has been replenishing the Plants that Changed the World display to make it more engaging for our visitors, for example with a diversity of the crops on display including heritage vegetables, and growing techniques such as the 'three sisters' (a method of companion planting originating from Indigenous agricultural practices in North and Central America whereby three crops– corn, beans, and squash– are cultivated together).

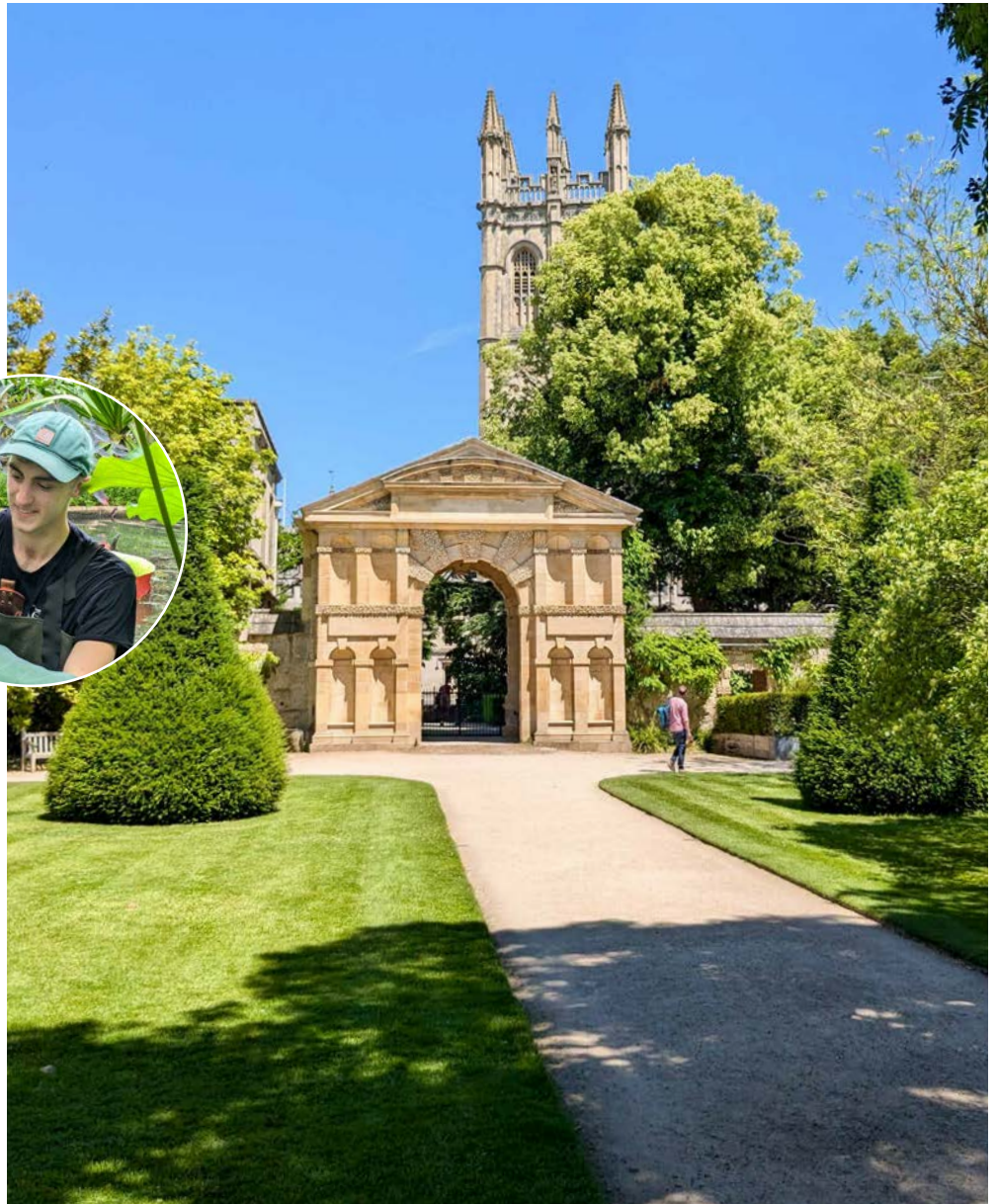
For several years we have partnered with Abingdon and Witney College to provide opportunities for young people to enter the world of horticulture. Oxford Botanic Garden has launched the careers of many fine horticulturists and it is important that we continue to provide such a training scheme. This also depends on the generosity of external donors to whom we are grateful. Our two Horticultural Apprentices George Wickson and George Harwood-Edwards continue to excel in both their practical work and studies; George Harwood-Edwards has also excelled in athletics this year and has competed in pole vault at the English National Championships. Recently I had the pleasure of meeting one of our recent apprentices, Jack Willerton, at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. Jack is flourishing while studying for his Kew Diploma, in no small part because he can draw upon experience from his time in Oxford.

In August we had the great pleasure of hosting two young apprentices from Bonn Botanic Gardens: Luisa Schuppler and Julian Hoppe. Our guests gained experience working with our horticultural team and from visiting Bristol Botanic Garden, Great Dixter in Sussex, and Kew. An exchange such as this not only provides a career enhancing experience for those involved but also creates an opportunity for our staff to compare practices with other botanic gardens. We now also have two new ambassadors for Oxford Botanic Garden.

It is with much regret that this will be my last contribution to the Friends' newsletter as I will be moving on to another opportunity. I would like to conclude by letting you know how much I have appreciated the support and kind words of encouragement from you all over the years. The Friday coffee mornings have always been a great forum to hear your ideas. I have always considered myself a 'custodian' and that my role is to maintain the Botanic Garden in a manner befitting such a fine institution. The Botanic Garden has a wonderful team of young, enthusiastic horticulturists who will, I am sure, continue to ensure the collections thrive.



Porcupine tomatoes (*Solanum pyracanthos*) in the Solanaceae bed



The Botanic Garden, early one summer morning. Inset: Former OBG horticultural apprentice Jack Willerton at RBG Kew

News from the Glasshouses

By Lewis Barrett



Horticulturists from Oxford Botanic Garden attending an Orchid care training day at RBG Kew

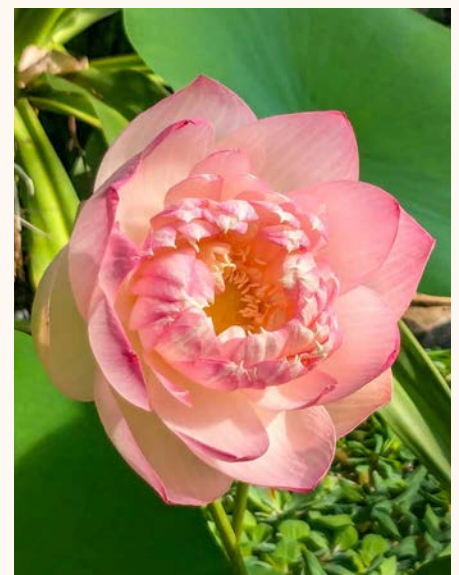
Over the Summer, a group of OBG's horticulturists attended a workshop at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew to learn more about the cultivation of orchids under glass. We were shown around the extensive collections held in Kew's Tropical Nursery which has many climate-controlled zones. Groups of orchids with similar climatic needs are grown in these different zones with particular levels of heat, humidity, and light. We observed the best way to repot orchids at different stages of their life cycle, and how to mount them on to cork bark for display. This Summer we also unveiled a new temporary display in the Conservatory, showcasing a range of different chilli plants with differing Scoville ratings - denoting their level of spiciness. Finally, our giant waterlily (*Victoria cruziana*) has put on an impressive display in the Waterlily House pond over the past few months. However, the shortening days of early Autumn have seen the shrinking of these leaves. The end of its life cycle marks the time for collection of seed - which we will store over the winter and sow in early spring to start the process once again.



Victoria cruziana fruit



Clockwise from top left to centre: five star orchid in Kew's Tropical Nursery; chillies on display in the Conservatory; a *Dendrobium* orchid in flower in the nursery house; *Nelumbo nucifera* in flower in the Waterlily House; a demonstration of orchid repotting at Kew; a rein orchid in Kew's Tropical Nursery; *Victoria cruziana* in leaf in the Waterlily House



News from the Arboretum

By Ben Jones

The mature Atlantic cedar (*Cedrus atlantica*) opposite the ticket office at the Arboretum was planted in the 19th century, and forms part of the original pinetum that was established by the Harcourt family. As important as it is to look after newly planted or young trees, it is equally important to do so for the mature trees in our collection, such as this magnificent specimen.

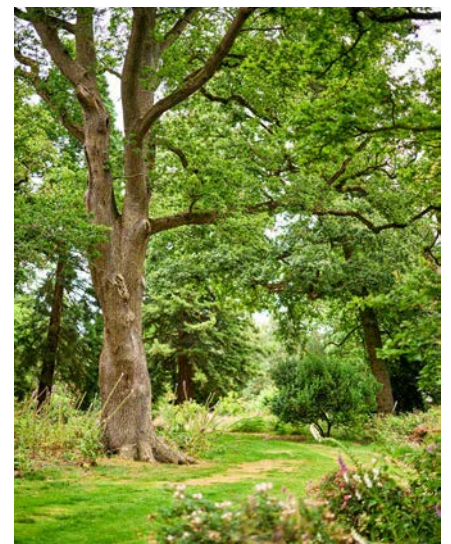
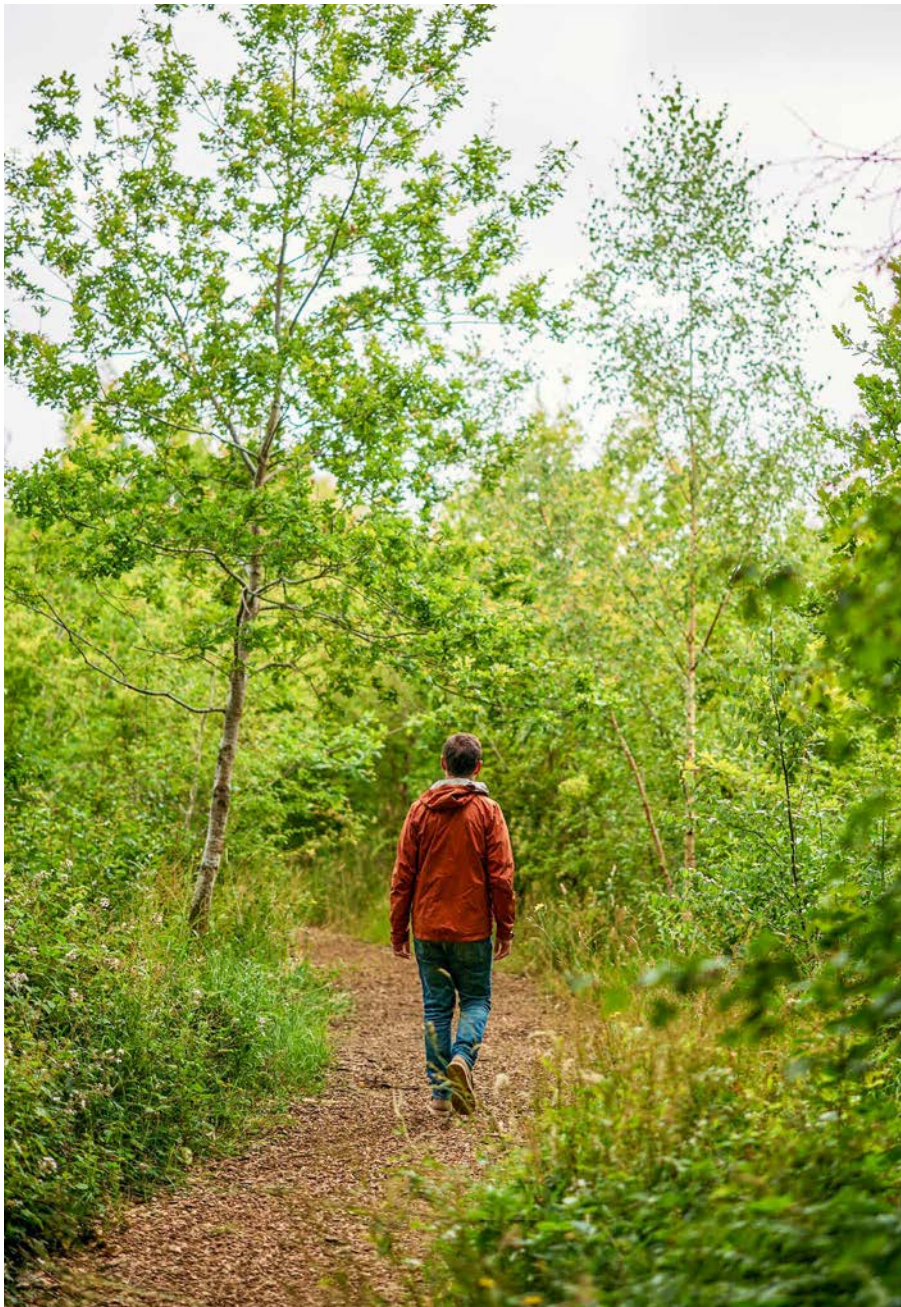
In July we undertook some important work to enhance the health of the *C. atlantica* by decompacting its rootplate with a Vogt Geo Injector and applying mulch. This process was necessary to alleviate the effects of soil compaction, which can

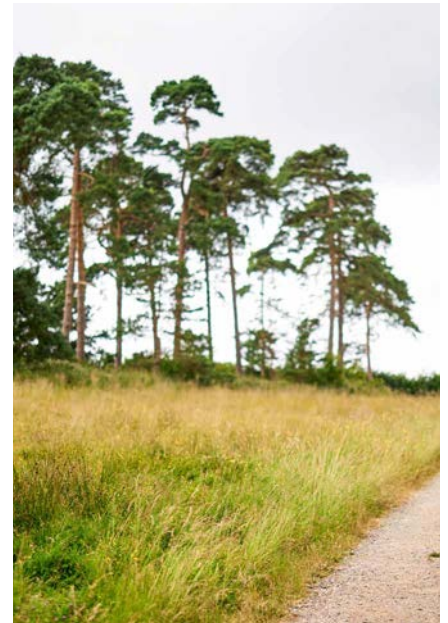
severely limit a tree's ability to access air, water, and essential nutrients.

We were grateful to Kevin Martin, Head of Tree Collections at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, for taking the time to visit the Arboretum for the day, to demonstrate the Vogt Geo Injector, and work alongside our Tree Team. The Vogt Geo Injector works by injecting compressed air into the soil at different depths, which breaks up the compacted layers. This process significantly improves aeration and water penetration, which are critical for healthy root growth. When soil is compacted, the fibrous roots struggle to access oxygen,

limiting their ability to function effectively. By decompacting the soil, we not only enhance root respiration but also promote the development of a deeper, more extensive root system. This enables the tree to absorb water and nutrients more efficiently, especially during periods of stress, such as drought.

One of the most important benefits of this process is the improved environment for mycorrhizal fungi, which form symbiotic relationships with tree roots. Mycorrhizae extend far beyond the reach of the tree's roots, increasing its ability to absorb nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrogen, which are essential for growth. In addition to facilitating





nutrient uptake, mycorrhizal networks also play a critical role in defending the tree's roots from soil-borne pathogens. These fungi form a protective barrier around the roots, preventing harmful organisms from taking hold and causing disease.

Following the decompaction, we applied a thick layer of organic mulch around the tree, further promoting root health by conserving soil moisture, regulating temperature, and providing a slow release of nutrients. To maximise the benefits of this work, we temporarily fenced off the

rootplate. These combined efforts will support the tree's long-term vitality, fostering healthier canopy growth and enhancing its overall resilience and longevity.

If you would like to get involved at the Arboretum, you can find lots of information on our website; <http://www.obga.ox.ac.uk>, under the 'Get Involved' section. If you would simply like to hear more about the exciting work going on at the Arboretum, then you'd be very welcome to join our monthly 'Insight Tour' which takes place on the first Wednesday of each month.



Zak Goad, Arborist, operating the Geo Injector



Geo Injector configured for decompaction work with Mike Harvey, Arboricultural Supervisor and Arborist Zak Goad

News from the Education Team

By Catherine Vivian, Tegan Bennett and Lauren Baker

We have had 90 primary school visits to the Garden and Arboretum this academic year, exceeding our previous numbers across both sites. This included 21 summer meadow sessions at the Arboretum, funded by Natural England, in which students investigated biodiversity, pollinators and insects in this special habitat. The meadow sessions were aimed particularly at engaging schools with

high pupil premium funding, which improves educational outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in state-funded schools in England.

Earlier this year, the Friends of Oxford Botanic Garden and Arboretum generously funded a project to improve the family offer at the Arboretum. The goal was to increase visitor numbers to the Arboretum, diversify our audience and provide enriching

engagement. Activities included wood-work, such as making coat hooks in the woodland barn, and craft themed around trees, animals and plants using natural materials, such as willow branches, pinecones and leaves. The new Arboretum family programme was launched during the Easter school holidays and has enabled us to run three school holiday family days (for 154 children plus



Bug hunting in the Arboretum meadow

Water and Wildlife Discovery Day

On July 14th, we held a public engagement event in collaboration with Oxford University Museum of Natural History (OUMNH) called the Water and Wildlife Discovery Day. Taking inspiration from Bioblitz, we invited experts from around Oxfordshire to run education activities at the Botanic Garden and promoted the event to state-funded schools in Oxfordshire. Activities covered all areas of biology, including plants, animals, invertebrates and environmental monitoring. Over 1,000 people attended the event, the water quality testing of the River Cherwell and the OUMNH invertebrate collections were particularly popular.



their adults), three days aimed at under 5s (for 57 children plus their adults) and one home learner day (for 40 children plus their adults). In addition to this we have run two activity trails, including a Tree Fairy Trail with Cicely Mary Barker's Flower Fairies, a geocache trail and seasonal backpack. Many of the attendees, especially in our under 5s sessions, mentioned that they were visiting for the first time and the advance ticket sales for under 5s and home learners have shown that people are visiting specifically for these events. We have also been pleased to see a high number of repeat visitors who attended multiple events and returned with their friends.

The Public Education Programme for 2024/2025 has now been launched on our website. Popular courses such as the wellbeing programme of forest bathing, yoga and aromatherapy meditation continue alongside new additions at the Botanic Garden including an ethnobotanical tour, carnivorous plant



Summer Sensations tour with Ross Edwards

care course and a literary tour in June that will be led by Professor Simon Hiscock and Professor Fiona Stafford. Meanwhile at the Arboretum we will continue to offer our sell-out courses such as conifer tree ID and foraging. Alongside this we will be introducing new workshops such as a native hedgerow seed collection day and a Harcourt honey walk and talk in June. We are also collaborating with our GLAM colleagues next May, with an 'Insect Adventure' led by Louis Lofthouse from the Oxford University Museum of Natural History.



School children exploring the meadow habitat



Mental Health and Wellbeing

By Rodger Caseby

This summer saw the start of an exciting new wellbeing research project funded by the Agile Initiative of the Oxford Martin School. The Agile Initiative responds to specific environmental policy questions with solution-focused research. We are partners in a multidisciplinary team that also includes Oxford's Departments of Psychiatry, Geography, Primary Care, and Education. The aim of the one-year project is to provide evidence as to the value of Nature-based Programmes for mental health and wellbeing in young people. This will include our work at Harcourt Arboretum with young people to reconnect them with nature through natural history, art and woodland craft in order to build resilience and confidence, develop social skills and reduce anxiety. The Agile project will produce a brief for policy makers in the Department for Education on nature-based programmes for mental health and wellbeing in schools.

Our summer programme included a weekly group for young people with the charity Response on Monday afternoons and monthly visits from the Berinsfield Community Centre, both at the Arboretum. These visits included a nature walk, Noticing Nature art activities and willow wood craft. We also completed our Summer Sensations series of Tuesday lunchtime spotlight tours at the Garden. These aim to give visitors' wellbeing a boost by focusing on a seasonal highlight. For the summer, we focused on some of the Horticultural Team's favourite plants, including the spectacular flowers of *Magnolia grandiflora* in a session led by Lewis Barrett, the statuesque giant fennel (*Ferula communis*) in the Mediterranean Garden led by H el ene Tronc, the variety of roses on display led by George Harwood-Edwards and George Wickson, the diversity of carnivorous plants led by Ross Edwards, and the iconic giant water lily (*Victoria cruziana*) led by Jess Snowball.

We also provided wellbeing walks for postgraduate students who remained in Oxford over the summer, hosted a school holiday summer camp run by local charity Ark-T at the Arboretum that included activities such as art, moth-trapping and a nature walk, and ran a touch tour of the trees in the Education Glade for adults with sight loss from MyVision Oxfordshire.

News from the Education Team continued...

The Friends of Oxford Botanic Garden and Arboretum generously funded networking events, ethnobotanical and etymological tours, and identification skills workshops held during the Student Botany Festival.



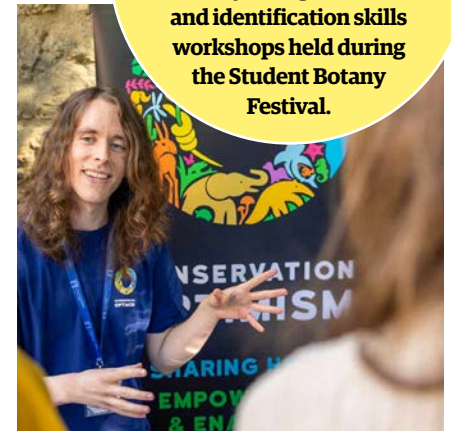
Students attending the Botanical University Challenge

Botanical University Challenge

From 28th to 30th August, OBGa hosted the Botanical University Challenge (BUC) 2024. This annual event brings together undergraduates and postgraduates from across the UK and Ireland for a University Challenge-inspired competition that celebrates their passion for plants. After the competition, a Student Botany Festival offered tours, talks, workshops, and networking events to help students expand their botanical skills and networks.

This year, 90 students from 24 botanical institutions attended the in-person final. After winning BUC 2023, Oxford placed 8th among 28 teams in the online heats. The University of Reading and Kew were eliminated in the semi-finals, and the University of York and University of Cambridge competed in a close final, with Cambridge winning 18-16 to become the BUC 2024 champions.

Thursday, 29th August, focused on career development. Students attended talks on academic and non-academic career paths and participated in a forum on early-stage research with PhD students. The Plant Science Research Showcase featured presentations from Dr Chris Thorogood, Dr Molly Grace, Professor Jennifer McElwain, and Professor Andy Hector on biomimetics, conservation, paleobotany and Dipterocarpaceae forests in Borneo respectively. Professor Alex Antonelli, Director of Science at Kew,



Careers Showcase

delivered the keynote talk on 'botanical dark spots' highlighting regions where conservation efforts could have significant future impact. A Careers Exhibition hosted nine diverse organisations, including BSBI, New Phytologist Foundation, RSK Biocensus, Wildflower Society, and Conservation Optimism, providing students with valuable networking opportunities.

On Friday, 30th August, the focus shifted to skill development, with workshops and tours such as conifer identification at Harcourt Arboretum, floral anatomy dissection, botanical illustration, floodplain meadow restoration, curation and etymology. The programme was well-received and received positive feedback from the participants.



Floral dissection at the Botanical University Challenge



Participants at the Garden

Friends' Section

News

By Simon Hiscock

The weather this summer has been mixed but there have still been near record numbers of visitors to the Garden and Arboretum. There has also been a good number of Friends' events and activities across both sites, including the Friends' Summer Party in August that was extremely well attended - thanks to Seonaid Danziger and her band of volunteers for making it such a special event. There were also events for patrons groups, the Bobarts (a splendid 20th anniversary dinner in the Conservatory) and the Danby Group (including, a gin and whisky tasting with The Oxford Artisan Distillery in July, and dinner in the Conservatory followed by viewing of the night-flowering cacti in the Arid House). The ever-popular monthly coffee mornings were also well attended through the summer. Thanks go to all the volunteers who deliver these on-site events and to those who deliver off-site in the form of garden visits.

By the time you read this newsletter the Friends' AGM (September 24th) will have taken place and the next steps towards the merger of the Friends with the University/OBGA agreed - the decision to merge having been taken at the 2023 AGM. Here I provide some key points that Chairman of the Board of Friends' Directors, Professor John Geddes, and I (as Secretary) made in the covering letter that accompanied the papers for the AGM:

Since the AGM of 2023, Friends' Directors (Trustees) Professor Geddes, Marius Apetrei (Treasurer) and I (three is the minimum number of Directors required by the Articles of the Friends Charity) have been overseeing the merger of the Friends into the administrative framework of the University. To this end the Directors have been taking legal advice on behalf of the Friends from BDB Pitmans LLP to ensure that the merger proceeds in line with Charity Commission and Companies House rules and in the interests of the membership. At the same time OBGA/the University has been receiving legal advice from University Legal Services to ensure the merger proceeds in the interests of the University. Both legal teams have agreed on a process for the merger and the Directors are following this agreed process.

Legal advice was to appoint further Directors at the 2024 AGM who are not employees of the University to avoid any possible conflict of interest issues; four new 'external' Directors will be proposed at the AGM. Legal advice was also to complete a 'due diligence checklist', which is required to provide a high-level accurate oversight of the assets and activities of the Friends.

The Directors have therefore been working closely with the Friends administration team to complete this check list, the most critical elements being in relation to the membership (including accurate numbers of members and terms of membership) and contracts (including details of significant contracts or agreements). At the time of writing a significant number of these checks have been completed and the accounts are accurate and audited (by Oxford accountants Wenn Townsend). Following the AGM, the aim is to complete the merger by the end of this year or the beginning of 2025.

Whilst carrying out the due diligence checks, planning for some Friends' activities, notably garden visits, has been paused temporarily, and will be resumed once this process is complete. Your patience during this period of change is appreciated. Following completion of the merger between the Friends and OBGA/University of Oxford and the harmonisation of the administrative framework, the whole functioning of the Friends' operations will be more efficient and streamlined, such that OBGA and the Friends can work more effectively as a unit for the success and further development of the Botanic Garden and Arboretum.



Chico, master distiller of The Oxford Artisan Distillery leading a gin tasting with the Danby Patrons' Group

Friends' Events

By Seonaid Danziger

22nd August 2024

The Friends' Summer Party 2024

We, the Friends Volunteers, were delighted as the number of tickets bought for the rearranged Friends' Party rapidly went up to 100, and then reached 180, a record number. The one thing we hoped for was a fine day, but the 22nd August started yet again with clouds and showers. You can imagine how relieved we were when at three o'clock the clouds parted and the sun came out - we had made all the canapés and could now set everything up in the gazebos. At 5.30 our guests, you, the Friends, came in with smiles all round.

I can give no better description of the party than to quote from a typical letter we received - with many thanks.

"A brief note for a huge thanks to all concerned for such a wonderful party on Thursday in the beautiful Botanic Garden which we thoroughly enjoyed.

The nibbles, drinks, company and conversations were all delightful and we were enlightened by the excellent tours and talks which we heard.

A splendid and most successful occasion!

We left feeling elated and greatly uplifted."

Saturday 19th October 2024

Friends' Cake Stall at the Autumn Fair

For the Autumn Fair we will be running a Cake Stall. Every penny made by these stalls is currently going towards the Friends' Paths Appeal. Donations of cakes very welcome on or before the day.

At the Spring Fair we sold a total of 225 cakes and sausage rolls. And we would like to do even better this time! So please make as many cakes, cupcakes and sausage rolls, as you possibly can. We can provide you with recipes if you would like, including one for gluten free vegan sausage rolls.



Friends' Coffee Mornings

The Friends' Coffee Mornings are held generally on the first Friday of each month; however, there is an exception for this December (see below). Coffee, tea, speciality teas and biscuits are served from 10.30am in the Garden conservatory. The dates are:

2024

November 1st at the Arboretum

December 13th at the Botanic Garden

2025

January 2025 No coffee morning

February 7th at the Botanic Garden

March 7th at the Botanic Garden

Please remember to bring your Friends' card for entry to the Garden and to check the Friends' website for any changes.



Don't forget your membership card

when you come to visit the Garden or Arboretum. Our ticket office staff do not have access to the membership database (for data protection reasons) and can't let you in free of charge if you don't have your membership card!

Message to all email users

If you are not receiving regular e-bulletins with news of Friends' events by email, it will be because you have not signed up to receive them. If you wish to sign up, please send an email with your name, to the Friends' Administrator at friends.administrator@obg.ox.ac.uk.

Dates for the Newsletter

The newsletter is published and sent out three times a year, in mid-March, early July, and early November

The Danby Patrons' Group

By Sarah Taylor

On a showery evening in August, the Danby group enjoyed another magical evening in the Garden. We were treated to a talk by Chris Thorogood on squirting cucumbers (*Echballium elaterium*), as joint author of a forthcoming publication on their biomechanics. He explained their extraordinary explosive method, propelled by liquid under pressure, for dispersing seeds: many of us had great fun squeezing them to good effect. We then repaired to the conservatory for our annual dinner, a highly convivial meal. After dinner, we repaired to the Arid House in the hope of once more seeing the huge white flowers of the night flowering cactus (*Hylocereus*). Sadly, the cacti had decided to flower the previous night and were preparing to flower again - as seen in the profusion of buds in the photograph below - so, on this occasion, we were left wanting but still marvelling. There was plenty else to look at and Simon Hiscock regaled us with anecdotes on plants and their evolution

as we explored. This was another evening combining companionship, beautiful plants and science, the hallmark of the Danby Group, which exists to support both Oxford Botanic Garden and Arboretum and the University's Department of Biology, particularly the Herbaria (once closely associated with the Garden).

We are given unique access to the Garden and Arboretum and to the scientists collaborating in it, as well as to other University buildings with botanical connections. In September, we will, in hard hats and steel capped boots, be shown round the Life and Mind building ahead of its completion: it will be home to the Department of Experimental Psychology and a new Department of Biology and will significantly

improve the way psychological and biological science is undertaken in Oxford, helping scientists to solve some of our major global challenges.

Please do join our special Patrons' group to experience a taste of the wonderful work being undertaken in the Garden and wider University.



Hylocereus undatus

The Bobarts Patrons' Group

By Bebe Speed, Rebecca Mather, Claire McGlashan (Bobarts events organisers)



Cannon Bridge House roof gardens

Bobarts' outings in late summer have included visits to Charlton Farm and Cadenham Manor, three London gardens and Chivel Farm in Heythrop.

At Charlton Farm we were shown around by Sarah Rivett-Carnac (also of the Generous Gardener set up). She has developed the beautifully planted garden from scratch over 12 years from fields and amongst many striking features it

has a mysterious inky black rectangular pool. Cadenham, owned by Victoria Nye, was notable for its roses in profusion with the added attractions of fountains and statuary laid out in a series of rooms.

Our London outing took in Cannon Bridge House roof gardens another wonderful and sadly last choice of Helen Potts who is stepping down from organising the Bobarts visits which she has done so well for so long. The quality of the lawns, diversity of unusual plants and sheltered nature where proteas and agapanthus were growing in abundance belies its roof top position. Not until you look up and see Tower and London Bridges do you realise just what a feat this garden is. In contrast to the luxury of the roof garden, Helen had also arranged for us to visit a social housing garden, Red Cross Gardens (set up by Octavia Hill, one of the Founders of the National Trust) as well as Crossbones Graveyard which is now a memorial garden and was a burial place for 15,000 sex workers and paupers. Many interesting social class comparisons to be made across the activities of

the day. We are all most grateful to Helen for all the work she has done for Bobarts over the years.

Our next trip was to Chivel Farm, the garden of Rosalind Sword where we saw wonderful colour combinations in the herbaceous borders. Rosalind told us that she plans the garden to be at its best in August and September when she knows the family will be at home because

of bringing in the harvest on the farm. One clever thing is the way the gardens gradually shade into the surrounding fields - beautifully accomplished.

Perhaps the crowning event of the summer was the dinner we held in the Botanic Garden conservatory to celebrate 20 years of the Bobarts as well as being a way of remembering and celebrating Jenny Turner about whom Helen spoke eloquently. The conservatory was turned into a magical place full of flowers on the tables (not, we might add, ones pilfered from the Gardens) with good and abundant wine and delicious food provided by Katie Ryder-Richardson.

And now for next year - whilst we can't as yet confirm any visits due to the legally mandated on-going pause whilst the Friends' charity merges with the University of Oxford, we are already devising a programme which will begin as soon as we get the go-ahead, hopefully in January or February. Watch this space!

Calendar

Friends' external visits are currently paused. Please read the Director's Friends update on p.13 for more details.

Please check on the website: www.obga.ox.ac.uk for the latest news regarding forthcoming events.

For booking your ticket, please go to www.obga.ox.ac.uk/book

A full programme of short courses, talks and tours at OBGA can be found at www.obga.ox.ac.uk/whats-on

November

Friday 1st November, 10.30am
Coffee Morning, Harcourt Arboretum

December

December 7th & 8th
Christmas Fair, Oxford Botanic Garden
Friday 13th December, 10.30am
Coffee Morning, Oxford Botanic Garden

February

Friday 7th February, 10.30am
Coffee Morning, Oxford Botanic Garden

March

Friday 7th March 7th, 10.30am
Coffee Morning, Oxford Botanic Garden

**The Friends of Oxford
Botanic Garden and Arboretum,**
Rose Lane, Oxford OX1 4AZ.



All Friends' enquiries, including those about Friends' events, should be made to the Friends' Administrator.

Tel: **01865 610303**

E-mail: friends.administrator@obga.ox.ac.uk

Web: www.obga.ox.ac.uk

This Newsletter was edited by Chris Thorogood and Carol Maxwell. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect the policies of the Board of the Friends or the Visitors of Oxford Botanic Garden.