

Foreword

Welcome to volume 21 and congratulations to all contributors to this volume. The work reported on here has been achieved through the last two difficult years. As we come out of the urgency of the Covid-19 pandemic, a return to some of the energy and interaction that we previously enjoyed is very welcome. Many projects have resumed with increased enthusiasm, fuelled by a sense of what we have been missing and time lost due to restrictions. In-person events are returning, bolstered by this enthusiasm and armed with new possibilities and habits learned when many of us made a rapid switch to online interactions. One in-person event that had to be rescheduled several times is the 7th Global Botanic Gardens Congress in Melbourne, Australia, now taking place on 25–29 September 2022. The programme is available on the Congress website (<https://www.7gbgc.org>) and the event promises to be a stimulating four days focusing on the opportunities afforded by botanic gardens as agents for change. *Sibbaldia* will be displaying a poster presentation and I look forward to seeing regular readers and authors and meeting new ones. Please come and find us under the theme of ‘Global Conversations’ and introduce yourself.

Those of us who work with plants and in conservation are hopeful that the much-documented renewed appreciation of plants and green spaces (Nicholls, 2021) will endure. In her Guest Essay, Beverley Glover shares how the creativity of staff at Cambridge Botanic Garden in the UK blossomed to engage a global audience when the garden closed its gates in March 2020. The potential explored then has been incorporated into engagement programmes, and Beverley shines a light on the many

opportunities for attracting a range of audiences further afield as well as those walking through the gates now that the garden has reopened.

We must not lose sight of the ground that was gained in the hearts of people who found a renewed appreciation of the green space, botanic garden, countryside and even houseplants around them when they were confined to their local area for months at a time through 2020 and 2021. Is it a sign of how changed the ornamental ideal is in western gardens when Best in Show at the Royal Horticultural Society’s Chelsea Flower Show was won by the Rewilding Garden? This show garden was a horticultural composition evoking a scene dominated by native plant species and included features created by reintroduced beavers. The garden was a testament to interactions found in nature and horticultural skill, both of which were much valued by the judges. Such a display recognises not only the importance of considering natural processes in horticulture, but also a growing appetite for more biodiverse gardens and landscapes in popular culture. The words ‘rewilding’ and ‘reintroduction’ are familiar in the popular media, and ‘No mow May’ needs no explanation in the UK these days. Even with its global visual appeal and its exhibitors and visitors from all over the world the Chelsea Flower Show is undoubtedly UK- and western-centric and therefore not fully representative of the problems our climate and biodiversity face, nor of the solutions to the challenges. However, here there is hope that the ground is more fertile for ideas and action to acknowledge the value of biodiversity, and plants as the support system for the rest of life. Our precious

botanic gardens are contributors to the resources needed for that action, as guardians of genetic resources, research centres and educators, as well as providers of amenity and green space. This volume showcases projects and stories from botanic gardens around the world performing these vital functions in unique and inspirational ways.

Gullele Botanic Garden is a young institution working to document and conserve the biodiversity of Ethiopia. Talemos Seta and Birhanu Belay describe the layout, facilities, education programmes and research activities of this large garden that boasts the ideal combination of features: an extent of relatively undisturbed landscape of native species, former plantations in restoration, and ornamental and touristic areas. This Garden Profile is *Sibbaldia*'s first of any African gardens and I hope readers can look forward to more garden profiles from that continent.

Two articles come from the busy horticultural team at Auckland Botanic Gardens (ABG). When Emma Bodley, Robyn Simcock and Rebecca Stanley decided to establish green roofs on the garden structures they found that all the literature available only offered guidance on species suitable for northern hemisphere landscapes, so they decided to set up their own trials for New Zealand. Here they describe how plantings of exotics and natives fared, and share their experiences of looking after green roofs in the southern hemisphere. Emma Bodley, Paula Lollback, Jack Hobbs, Mere Brewer and Rebecca Stanley have spent 20 years conducting trials of popular rose cultivars for pest and disease resistance without the application of chemical treatments. Here they provide lists of the cultivars that have consistently come out on top. The team at ABG are always striving for sustainability in

their horticultural practices and displays, and lead by example to inspire their visitors.

The establishment of Global Consortia has been a great step forward in unifying actions to research and conserve significant threatened taxonomic groups. They bring institutions and individuals with specialist expertise together around a common cause (Global Conservation Consortia, 2022). The Global Consortium for *Erica* was established this year (Pirie et al., 2022). Also in this year Charles Nelson and Michael Pirie published 'Where have all the heathers gone?'. They chart the rise and fall of the horticultural fortunes of this once popular group in western gardens of the global north and explore the impacts that declining horticultural favour have on *Erica* spp., *Calluna* spp. and *Daboecia* spp.

The Student Project feeds into the curatorial work of the Global Conservation Consortium for *Rhododendron*. Helen McMeekin conducted a curatorial review of *Rhododendron* in subsection *Maddenia* at Logan Botanic Garden in the south-west of Scotland as part of her studies towards an HND in Horticulture with Plantsmanship. She illustrates not only how crucial it is to understand exactly which taxa are held in a living collection, but also the importance of comprehensive and carefully stored collection data.

Chris Thorogood, Joko Ridho Witono, Sofi Mursidawati and Andreas Fleischmann provide an overview of the families that make up the fascinating and, to many, mysterious parasitic plants. There is still much to learn about the behaviour of this somewhat obscure group that contains so many species that deviate from what is usually considered essential for plants: the ability to photosynthesise. The authors share experiences of some of the families

in cultivation, with the aim of encouraging readers to try their hand at growing them, and explore reasons for their under-representation in botanic and other gardens. Finally, the authors call for further research and global collaboration akin to those of the Consortia described above.

Kevin McGinn at the National Botanic Garden of Wales describes the action taken to collect and conserve the genetic resources of the flora of Wales in the modest but effective seedbank he and colleagues have established there. Practical information for gardens of all sizes interested in setting up a seed bank is provided. He also gives insights into how seed collection can be made commercially viable through the management of biodiverse meadows.

Finally, Paulina Maciejewska-Daruk decided to experiment with a propagation method of common bamboo, reducing the need to move large and unwieldy plants around glasshouses. She describes how the experiment went in this illustrated Short Note.

Short Notes are perfect for communicating horticultural techniques,

for snappy pieces of information and for authors who feel their topic does not merit a full-length article. If you have ideas for Short Notes – or longer articles – and would like to discuss them, please get in touch by emailing sibbaldia@rbge.org.uk

Kate Hughes, Editor

References

GLOBAL CONSERVATION CONSORTIA

(2022). Available online: <https://www.globalconservationconsortia.org> (accessed July 2022).

NICHOLLS, D. (2021). Parklife: the year we fell in love with London's green spaces. *The Observer*, 17 July. Available online: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2021/jul/17/parklife-the-year-we-fell-in-love-with-london-green-spaces-parks-sophia-spring> (accessed July 2022).

PIRIE, M.D., BLACKHALL-MILES, R., BOURKE, G., CROWLEY, D., EBRAHIM, I., FOREST, F., KNAACK, M., KOOPMAN, R., LANSDOWNE, A., NÜRK, N.M., OSBORNE, J., PEARCE, T.R. *ET AL.* Preventing species extinctions: a global conservation consortium for *Erica*. *Plants People Planet*, 4(4): 335–344. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1002/ppp3.10266>