Foreword

Since the last editorial, *Sibbaldia* has attended the 8th Global Botanic Gardens Congress (8GBGC), organised by Botanic Gardens Conservation International and NParks, Singapore in August 2024. The Congress was beautifully organised and well attended, with 750 in-person delegates from 73 countries and several hundred more logging in to presentations online. Key themes included collaborative work with meta-collections and urban planting (particularly well demonstrated by the exceptionally green host city) for adaptation to increasingly extreme climatic events that cause flooding, wind tunnels and the urban heat island effect. A third prominent topic of discussion was the use of genetic data to manage collections and conserve species.

The poster presentation for *Sibbaldia* highlighted how the work published in this journal contributes to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework targets adopted at the United Nations Biodiversity Conference of the Parties in 2022. Attending the conference was an opportunity to engage with these themes and to encourage potential authors to submit their ideas for articles. The two articles in this volume contribute to Target 4: halt species extinction and protect genetic diversity.

The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, publisher of *Sibbaldia*, pursues programmes on all these topics, specifically the International Conifer Conservation programme[1] and the Global Conservation Consortia for Rhododendrons and Conifers,[2] the Nature-Based Solutions project[3] and the Scottish Native Plants Project.[4] Presentations delivered at 8GBGC indicate that vital projects are going well all over the world, and I sincerely hope that we will see more articles on these subjects where they intersect with horticulture and living collection management in botanic gardens.

Sibbaldia No. 23 closed in December 2024. It is a small volume, so will be merged with No. 24, which will run throughout 2025. All articles published in Nos 23 and 24 will be printed in one bound copy in early 2026.

There is a fundamental tension in the scope of this journal with its focus on practical actions and the activities of its authors and readers. For those who are doing this work, it can be difficult to find capacity in the working week to note observations and then to synthesise these into a longer written piece for publication. This tension is consistent with the purpose with which *Sibbaldia* was established: to publish the experiences and work of botanic garden horticulturists (Rae, 2003). Successful collection management requires specialised skills utilised in combination with unique experiences and sensibilities. Horticulturists put these into action every working day to manage and cultivate plants in their care. Physical care of the plants and all the associated activities, including fieldwork and record-keeping, are a challenge to combine with periods of time spent at a desk writing. Moreover, those who choose the profession may do so precisely because it offers an alternative to the many deskbound careers. As editor, I recognise this tension

[1] https://threatenedconifers.rbge.org.uk/
[2] www.bgci.org/our-work/networks/global-conservation-consortia-gcc
[3] www.rbge.org.uk/science-and-conservation/nature-based-solutions
[4] https://stories.rbge.org.uk/archives/category/science/scottish-plant-recovery

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and believe that it strengthens the rationale for *Sibbaldia*'s persistence. There are many journals in the world, and it is important that each is unique. But how many publications directly address the important complexities of botanic garden collection care and management, at times misunderstood by a lay audience?

Sibbaldia recognises that the road to publication can occasionally be bumpy and sometimes slow. However, the editorial team is available to support authors who have a perspective the rest of the botanic garden community would like to hear about. Please get in touch if you have an idea for an article, ways to share your work or suggestions for further publications, even if the time for, or the idea of, writing it does not come easily. We are here to help!

The two articles in this volume are no less important for the size of the volume in which they appear. Nederlof *et al.* have been monitoring wild populations of *Primula palinuri*, an endangered species endemic to a tiny coastal area in southern Italy. They have created propagation protocols to produce viable seeds through hand-pollination techniques, allowing implementation of effective conservation programmes for the species.

Williamson *et al.* use predictive modelling software to understand the environmental niches that may be suitable for future plantings of the narrow Victorian endemic *Wittsteinia vacciniacea*. This work is a continuation of the Raising Rarity project described in *Sibbaldia* No. 22 by Hirst *et al*. (2024). Raising Rarity identifies and trials threatened native species suitable for domestic cultivation and incorporates this approach as part of the suite of techniques to help species' survival as the extent of their native habitats dwindle and/or climatic conditions change.

Both these articles highlight the fundamental importance of observation for understanding the physiology and behaviour of species, as well as the importance of the skills and facilities available at botanic gardens. Where many of the internationally recognised botanic gardens are renowned for their collections of non-native species and associated conservation programmes, the articles here indicate the equal importance of gardens to protect their local flora. I look forward to more articles on this topic in No. 24.

Kate Hughes, Editor.

References

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