

Behind the scenes at Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh

Your questions answered

Questions about plants

How many plants do you have in the nursery?

We have 12005 plants in total, 2436 which are native, and we so far have planted over 8000 back into the wild.

How do you know where to find the seeds for the plants? And how do you know what seed is what?

We work closely with landowners all over Scotland who have an idea what plants they have on their land. We also have access to databases where locations of plants are recorded which is a great help.

What's the hardest plant to find?

In my experience so far, moss! They are so tiny, can be hidden and hard to identify – which makes them all the more magical.

What is the smelliest/strongest smelling plant that you have in the Botanics?

Titan arum, better known as the corpse flower for its odour, which is ewww. This plant lives in our glasshouses as it is a tropical plant that requires a hot climate.

What's the rarest flower?

For the UK, possibly the Ghost Orchid, which has rarely been seen in the wild. So rare that it was declared extinct in 2005 until one flower was re-discovered in 2009, but it has never have been seen since.

Questions for Rebecca

Why did you choose this job?

I have always been inspired and passionate about nature, and to be able to contribute and dedicate myself to help protect and restore it is a real honour and privilege.

What's the most interesting plant you've found?

I love the bryophyte world, which consists of mosses, liverworts and hornworts. Tiny plants which are just as important as the biggest plants in nature. The Ghostwort is so interesting. It can only be found hidden in the soil, and is pure white, not green like most plants that gain nutrients from the sun through photosynthesis. Ghostwort isn't green, because it actually steals its nutrients from other plants by using a fungal partner! How cool is that?!

Have you ever had an allergic reaction to the plants?

Luckily no, but that does not mean I am not consistently careful and prepared before working with or touching any plants. Nature can bite back!

Do you have a favourite plant?

My favourites change as I learn and work with more plants, but at the moment it is the Yellow Marsh Saxifrage, as it's the pickiest plant I've ever met so far and really hard to grow, and I love a challenge. Also, it is a beauty with little yellow flowers which light up barren bog in which it is found in the wild.