

Herbarium opens its doors

Visitors are in for a rare treat in September when one of Kew's most fascinating departments opens to the public. The Herbarium, which includes Kew's Library & Archives collections, will open on Saturday 17 and Sunday 18 September as part of the Open House London weekend event.

Founded in 1852, Kew's Herbarium, one of the largest in the world and a Grade II listed building, contains some 7 million preserved specimens representing nearly 98 per cent of plant genera. The collections include the personal herbaria of many celebrated scientists and explorers, including those of Charles Darwin, Sir William and Sir Joseph Hooker, Ernest Wilson and Richard Spruce.

Kew's library is one of the most important reference

sources in the world and with the Archives contains more than half a million items, including books, illustrations and photographs.

Keeper of the Herbarium, Professor Simon Owens, says, "Information will be available on current science projects at Kew, primarily focused on conservation." He adds, "There will also be information on the architecture of the Herbarium and Library buildings, which will include details of the proposed new extension."

During Open House London, Kew's botanists and Library & Archives staff will be on hand to answer questions and explain the projects.

The Herbarium will be open from 10am–4pm and no pre-booking is required.



Visit Kew's historic Herbarium building and meet its staff on 17–18 September

New-look Victoria Gate area provides easier access

The Victoria Gate area has recently been redesigned in response to the increase in visitor numbers at Kew. Concerns at lengthy queues – particularly at peak times and with visitors now above the one million mark – have made it vital to improve access in and out of this important area. "Sixty per cent of our visitors use this gate – that's more than

600,000 people," says Paul Buckley, head of visitor services.

Key improvements to the area include four more ticket service points, making eight in all, better sight-lines into the Gardens and a new priority access route for Friends, season-ticket holders and groups. Work continues to complete new toilets and to modify the retail area.

Most importantly, the public concourse has been enlarged: "We've filled in the pool, which has always been somewhat problematic, providing a gathering or queuing space for 300 people rather than 150," explains Paul. "The new layout will provide faster access on busy days, easier flow into the Gardens and make better sense of the whole arrival process."

The redesigned entrance area at Victoria Gate



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