

## The Mediterranean House Project

We are thrilled to be writing to you as a highly valued supporter of the Botanical Gardens to confirm that our Mediterranean House Project is now complete! We hope that the following summary report will be of interest to you and your trustees. On behalf of all at Birmingham Botanical Gardens we wish to extend our sincere and heartfelt thanks for your generous support. Delivering our Mediterranean House Project has been critical to preserving and growing the Gardens for future generations – it now provides a welcoming and engaging space to inform and inspire visitors on the importance of Mediterranean Biomes and climate change. Thank you.



*Our new and improved Mediterranean House.*

### **Birmingham Botanical Gardens - Organisation Summary**

Birmingham Botanical Gardens (BBG) is one of the most significant Botanic Gardens in the UK. Registered Grade II\*, the beautiful, landscaped gardens and iconic glasshouses occupy 15 acres in a Conservation Area, 1 mile from Birmingham City Centre. Designed by JC Loudon, this rich, uniquely biodiverse natural landscape environment and glasshouse estate has remarkably, survived intact. BBG was founded in 1829, fuelled by a passion for plants from around the world, their classification, scientific study, cultivation, and presentation. John Claudius Loudon was one of the most influential gardeners of his time, renowned both for increasing our knowledge and understanding of gardening and botany, of plants and the environment, and for wanting to share that knowledge widely with others. BBG was a symbol of pride in Birmingham and a beautiful green space for people to enjoy and benefit from in a growing industrial city and opened to the public in 1832. The Living Collection comprises over 10,000 documented taxa, plants and trees (30,000 plants) and is one of the largest and most diverse collections in central England and includes the National Bonsai and National Cyclamen Collections. Our award-winning education programme reaches 19,000 school children annually to benefit from learning outside the classroom, exploring a wide range of subjects linked to the curriculum from adaptation to climate change and plant DNA. With a turnover of c£1.9m, the independent charity has no public subsidy and relies on income from visitors and events, members, grants, and donations from trusts and individuals.

## Project Aim and Rationale

The aim of the Mediterranean House Project was to tell the origin story of popular commercially available plants to connect people with the conservation of plant biodiversity in originating countries, facilitating a discussion about climate change adaptation, habitat loss and plant poaching.

With the generous support of Loppylugs & Barbara Morrison Charitable Trust, Stanley Smith UK Horticultural Trust, The Grimmitt Trust, The Limoges Trust, William A Cadbury Charitable Trust and The CB & HH Taylor 1984 Trust, we have been able to transform our Mediterranean House, creating an attractive display with high quality interpretation around Mediterranean plant biomes whilst raising the profile and increasing public understanding of climate change and plant conservation.

Through our project we have successfully:

- Restored the living collection back to health by replanting in appropriate terracotta pots and in new growing media to cater for the requirements of species and cultivars, using a range of new growing materials and specialised tools.
- Redesigned and created a compelling display with the purchase of new hybrids and inclusion of new visitor interpretation highlighting the importance of Mediterranean Biomes and climate change.
- Labelled and accessioned plants within the collection, adding this information to our new Garden Explorer App (IrisBG) which will enable us to make historic/heritage plant lists from BBG widely available to the public via our website; and utilising the digitised collection for engagement and learning programmes in the Gardens.
- Gained BGCI accreditation ensuring BBG is distinguished as a botanic garden and recognising our achievements in plant conservation.
- Removed one of the floor beds, creating a space for displays and repurposing the area for talks and activities.

## Cyclamen Celebration

In February 2024 we were able to use our newly designed space to host our first Cyclamen Celebration. This was a major special exhibition of the Cyclamen to promote and celebrate this important collection. This major display required the full support of BBG horticultural team and included the creation of a new display area and supporting interpretation. The Cyclamen Celebration ran from 10 to 18 February 2024. This hugely successful event attracted high levels of public interest and very positive response from BBG members and raised the profile of the Cyclamen collection. The event was visited by 4,555 which represents a 30% increase on visitors from the same period the previous year. The daily average was c500 with a peak day of 863 visitors. In addition, the Gardens attracted record numbers of membership requests and sold 138 new memberships during the event. The event attracted positive media interest and BBG delivered an extensive PR campaign across all media and social media outlets, and the event was relayed live on BBC regional television.





**PR for our Cyclamen Celebration:**

14/02/2024	Birmingham Mail (Print)	18,500 regional print
14/02/2024	Birmingham Live (Web)	323,000 regional online
16/02/2024	BBC West Midlands (TV)	Live 5-minute interview/weather from Cyclamen display

**Website stats:**

165 views on the event page.

252 views of the newsletter on website.

3851 visitors to the website.

1095 membership previews.

78 Drop in talks: Our national cyclamen collections.

57 Horticulture talks: Cyclamen in the wild and in cultivation.

**Newsletter stats:**

12,236 emails (47%) were opened for our Half Term newsletter.

**Social media stats:**

252 likes on social media post about the cyclamen display.

222 likes about Ruth's traineeship (image shared with a link to read the case study).



*"Beautiful Cyclamen!"*

*"Hope the display will be left as long as possible, Colin"*

*"Inspiring array of flowers, Bret"*

*"Colourful and calming 😊"*

*"This is a fabulous arrangement of all these plants. Well done! Sandra and Dan"*

*"Absolutely fabulous display, with a fascinating talk from Ruth - there's so much to learn about these plants! I had no idea. Very highly recommended. Thank you all involved."*

*"My favourite colour was the purple cyclamen, Zaley, 4 years old"*

*"Beautiful! We have never seen so many. What a lovely sight!"*

*"Really beautiful exhibition of plants, we hope you do it again next year. We really enjoyed Ruth's inspiring talk! Thank you for all the pleasure it has given us"*

We would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude for your generous donation, without which none of this would have been possible.

Longer term, as part of the masterplan programme for redevelopment over a 5-year timescale, we will undertake structural repairs and full restoration of the fabric of the glasshouse and a sinking fund will be established to enable ongoing repairs and maintenance and horticultural development.

Thank you once again to you for your kind donation and support of this project – it really does mean so much to us all.



