

# BIRMINGHAM BOTANICAL GARDENS



THE **BIRMINGHAM**  
**BOTANICAL**  
**GARDENS**  
AN EDUCATIONAL CHARITY

**FRIENDS OF BIRMINGHAM**  
**BOTANICAL GARDENS NEWSLETTER**  
**SUMMER 2014**

## Opening Times 2014

The Gardens are open every day except Christmas Day and Boxing Day from **10.00 am**.

## Closing Times

**1 May to 30 September:** Doors close at **6.00pm** - weekends at **7.00pm**

**1 October to 31 October:** Doors close at **5.00pm**

Admission Prices	
Family *	£22
Adult or Two Adults	£7 or £12
Groups **	£6 (adult) or £4 (concessions)
Concessions	£4.75
Children under 5	FREE
SHOP	FREE

\*Family ticket = 2 adults and up to 3 concessions.

\*\* Pricing valid for groups of 10 or more. School visits are priced separately.

**Please Note:** all prices include a 10% donation as part of the Gift Aid scheme.

*giftaid it*

## Membership Options

Family Membership £65 – allows entry for up to 5 people from the same family

Annual Membership £40 – allows entry for 2 people from the same family

Single Membership £35

Guest Ticket £13 – may be purchased by Annual, Family or Single Members only and allows entry for one other person



As Chairman of the Friends of Birmingham Botanical Gardens I would like to encourage all our visitors to support the Gardens. The Gardens are a source of inspirational interest to many visitors each year. We have photographers, artists,

frequent wedding parties as well as knowledgeable visitors who know the Latin names for many of the plants. Other visitors just enjoy the peace and tranquillity.

Over the summer months there are a variety of open air theatre productions which attract many visitors regardless of the weather and there is the band playing every Sunday to enhance your enjoyment of the Gardens. The Butterfly House is very popular with all ages of visitors.



The Gardens rely on volunteers both in the garden and in the office. We have a good number of garden volunteers, but if you feel you could help with some administration you would be very welcome. Sometimes we are run off our feet and would appreciate some help. Maybe you would like to join the Friends committee and help organise events.

During August we will be commemorating the 100th anniversary of World War One with an exhibition of Poppies or Flowers of Remembrance pictures in the Gallery. The schools that use our facilities plus local private schools have been asked to take

part. We are hoping for an interesting exhibition as the age is for all school age children including the 2-4 year olds. Adults are also very welcome to exhibit.



If you are looking for a way to remember a loved one why not sponsor a tree in the Gardens. Tree sponsorship starts at £350.00 for a small tree and up to £2500.00 for a mature tree. Tree

maintenance is expensive - we need your help to keep our trees healthy.

Rosemary Radford - Chairman of the Friends of BBG



*“Give me a land of boughs in leaf,  
A land of trees that stand;  
Where trees are fallen there is grief;  
I love no leafless land.”  
- A.E. Housman*

## *Lilium regale*



Regal by name and by nature, this stunning plant is the very epitome of high summer. Its white trumpet shaped flowers have a chrome-yellow throat and are typically blushed outside in rose-purple. The effect is completed by the large, protruding orange anthers. For those who prefer simpler colour combinations there is a virginal white form.

You might be surprised that the regal lily is one of the easiest lilies to grow, flowering in only three years from seed and only requires full sun and a well-drained rich soil to flourish. *Lilium regale* comes from a single valley in west China and was introduced to cultivation in 1903 by Ernest Wilson the world famous plant collector and former student at Birmingham Botanical Gardens. His leg was badly broken on this collecting trip and he spent the rest of his life with his so-called 'lily limp'!

Watch out for the conspicuous red lily beetles though as they and their black larvae love lilies nearly as much as we all do!

## *Senna corymbosa*



With its bright buttery yellow flowers, the *Senna corymbosa* really makes a statement in the Subtropical House. Its masses of yellow, pea like flowers give it a long season of interest and it really adds a splash of colour. Although tender, originating in Argentina and Uruguay, it can be placed outside in the summer, adding to any courtyard or Mediterranean garden scheme.

Not content with just being ornamental, some species of *Senna* have played a major role in herbal and folk medicine for millennia, and it is still a major item of national trade. Its purging effects are still used today, with £14 million being spent on laxatives in Britain alone!

It can be grown outside in a frost free, sheltered spot, in full sun or under glass.

## *Agapanthus* 'Charlotte'



A summer flowering herbaceous perennial, native to Southern Africa *Agapanthus* was brought back to Europe in the seventeenth century by the first European settlers when they stopped off at the Cape to replenish their supplies. They are grown for their showy blue or white lily-like flowers displayed on tall succulent stems amongst sheathes of green foliage.

The name *Agapanthus* is derived from the Greek 'agape', meaning love, and 'anthos', flower. They require well drained soil and a sunny position either in a border or container. Some cultivars are less hardy as the plants are also popular in Australia and the southern states of America, where winter survival is not at issue. Choose *Agapanthus* Headbourne hybrids for a reliable hardy variety.

- These are some of the plants of the month for the next few months at the Gardens. For other plants that look spectacular in these months see the website

## New Orchid Display by Sally Dickson

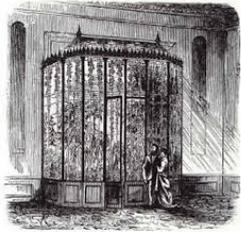
I am delighted to learn that a neatly prepared space in the Sub-tropical House is to be home to a new orchid case. These exotic flowers have long been associated with the Gardens.



Orchids were prominent among the vast number of new plant species coming to Britain that inspired the founding of the Gardens in 1832. A century earlier *Bletia verecunda* had been the first tropical orchid to flower in Britain. Since then interest in orchids had soared.

In 1838 an orchid house was erected. Local collectors exhibited prize-winning orchids at the Gardens and made generous donations of plants: Archibald Kenrick, manufacturer of cast iron hollow ware, in the 1860s; Charles Winn, brass-founder, in the 1870s; Joseph Chamberlain, the city's M.P., who was known for his orchid button-holes; and W. Waters Butler, of Mitchell and Butlers, Birmingham brewers.





These men were knowledgeable about orchids. They had the means to employ skilled gardeners and they could afford the heated glasshouses required.

William Latham, appointed curator in 1868, had specialist knowledge of orchid (and fern) cultivation. By 1893, when a catalogue of the orchid collection at the Gardens was published, there were 309 species, including several that were not in Kew's much larger holding.



Latham was particularly successful with *Cypripediums*, slipper orchids. He crossed *C. spicerianum* with *C. villosum* to produce *C. lathamianum*, and with *C. chamberlainianum*, collected from New Guinea in 1892, to produce *C. deedmannianum*, named after the indoor foreman, Charles Deedman. In 1925 the hybrid *C. 'Diana'* was persuaded to flower at the Gardens; two years later its flower spike carried 43 flowers.

However, the Gardens had financial problems in the 1930s and got rid of the *Cypripediums* which required high temperatures. *Cattleyas* and *Laeleas* were still grown so orchids did not totally disappear.



The new orchid case will be made of cedar wood and will provide the ideal warm, humid and ventilated space for pampering its charges. Artificial lighting will ensure they need experience no short dark days.

At the time of writing the arrival of the case is imminent. As to which of the 35,000 known varieties will be displayed there, I look forward to finding out.



**Sources:**

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Uglow, J., *A Little History of British Gardening*, Chatto & Windus, 2004.

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All photographs by the BBG and Gill Mills

