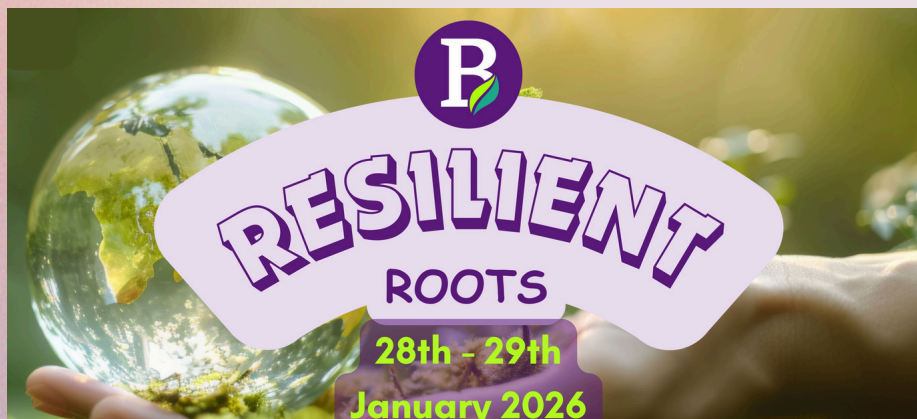


BGEN CONFERENCE – 2026

DAY ONE: WEDNESDAY

Programme Schedule

Welcome 🙌	09:00
<p>Plenary: What Does The Botanic Garden Of The Future Look Like?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair: Dr Paul Smith, Botanic Gardens Conservation International <p><u>Speakers</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Lucy Sutherland, National Botanic Garden Wales • Prof Pete Hollingsworth, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh • Raoul Curtis-Machin, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew • Dr Beverley Glover, Cambridge University Botanic Garden 	09:15
<p>Introducing Seed Conservation Education Programmes Based On The Baekdudaegan Global Seed Vault</p> <p>Dr Hoejin Kim, Korea Arboreta and Gardens Institute</p>	10:00
<p>Indigenous Voices</p> <p>Sally Fierenzi, Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria, Australia</p>	10:20
<p>Beyond The Garden Walls</p> <p>Gaia Busic, Grow Wild, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew</p>	10:40
Members Spotlight (lightening talks)	11:00
-BREAK ☕	11:20
<p>Workshops (choose one) **</p> <p>1) Livestreaming Offers For Schools (panel discussion)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robbie Kirkman, The Eden Project • Amy McDonald, Eve Armstrong & Gillian Davis, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh <p>2) The Use Of Digital Tools In Nature Engagement For Education</p> <p>Fiona Greenwold, National Education Nature Park, Royal Horticultural Society</p> <p>3) The Power Of Art</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Felicity Gaffney, Joseph Lynch & Melissa O'Brien – The National Botanic Gardens of Ireland <p>** see separate sheet for Workshop overview</p>	11:30
-CLOSE-	12:30



BGEN CONFERENCE – 2026

DAY TWO: THURSDAY

Programme Schedule

Welcome 🙌	12:30
Plenary: Exciting Speaker To Be Announced	12:45
Contributing To The Urban Food Policy And Strategy Through Educational Activities Mara Sugni and Francesco Zonca, Orto Botanico di Bergamo 'Lorenzo Rota'	13:30
Beyond The Hype: Navigating The Conservation Implications Of Artificial Intelligence Prof Chris Sandbrook, University of Cambridge Conservation Research Institute	13:50
-BREAK ☕	14:20
Workshops (choose one) **	
1) Green Skills Discussion Panel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brian Heppenstall, The Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management • Amy Leach, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh • Chris Meakin, Westonbirt, The National Arboretum • Carla Clark, Royal Parks 	
2) The Use Of Digital Tools In Nature Engagement For Education Fiona Greenwold, National Education Nature Park, Royal Horticultural Society	14:30
3) The Power Of The Pause Cath Ashby	
** see separate sheet for Workshop overview	
Bgen Annual Meeting	15:30
Live From The Edinburgh Fringe: Plants Are Total B*stards Dr Richard Milne, University of Edinburgh	16:00
-CLOSE-	16:45

WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

BGEN CONFERENCE – 2026

DAY ONE: WEDNESDAY

Workshop 1: Livestreaming Offers For Schools (*panel discussion*)

In this workshop we will hear from two projects (The Eden Project and Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh) on their live streaming offers to schools, how this has been developed, what it includes and what they have learnt from the experience.

This will be followed by an interactive panel session to discuss the successes and challenges of this kind of approach.

Speaker one: Robbie Kirkman, The Eden Project:

Developing a Rainforest Livestreaming Offer for Schools: our journey along a steep learning curve

Over the last couple of years we've been developing a livestreaming offer for schools. This talk will tell the story of that journey to date and where we want to go next. We'll talk tech, platforms, presenting, content covered, the high points, the low points, funding, the key challenges we face and the tricks we use to reach the most students and teachers.

Speaker two: Amy McDonald, Eve Armstrong & Gillian Davis, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh:

Engaging pupils across Scotland through live online lessons.

Since 2023, staff from Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh have been building a programme of live online lessons for primary learners – many in partnership with other organisations. These have reached thousands of pupils across Scotland via their classroom smartboards, allowing them to travel 'behind the scenes at the Botanic'. Join Amy, Eve and Gillian as they offer a different behind the scenes view for BGEN colleagues – the highs and lows of creating and delivering live online programming.

Workshop 2: The Use Of Digital Tools In Nature Engagement For Education

Fiona Greenwold, National Education Nature Park, Royal Horticultural Society

A presentation showing how the Nature Park programme is encouraging schools to monitor and record the biodiversity on their educational sites. These free-to-use digital tools are a great way for people to start looking and learning about their local flora and fauna, while also adding their recordings to national and global databases. We will be giving some examples of how we use these tools with young people and teachers.

The Tools

The Hidden Nature Challenge is a Nature Park tool that is a great gateway to exploring nature. *Seek* and *iNaturalist* are free apps that use AI to help the public identify and then record their sightings on a global platform. These are all linked to our community science research projects and the interactive Nature Park Map. We will give a quick demo on how to use the map with time for attendees to have a go too.

Outline for the session:

- Brief introduction and update on the programme
- Demo of the interactive Nature Park Map
- The Digital tools– Hidden Nature Challenge, Seek and iNaturalist
- How this feeds into community science programme research
- How does this all feed into the Nature Park map– some time to have a go yourself

Workshop 3: The Power Of Art

Felicity Gaffney, Head of Education, Joseph Lynch, Education Officer, & Melissa O'Brien, Artist and Education Officer.

At the National Botanic Gardens of Ireland we have been developing and working on innovative ways of integrating a range of art experiences into our education programmes. Felicity Gaffney and Joseph Lynch will explore the myriad ways of enriching the visitor experience through art and its unique ability to communicate a variety of important messages in line with the ethos and mission of the Botanic Gardens. Experiential learning, workshops and exhibitions can be useful in engaging and encouraging new and existing visitors to the Gardens. Artist Melissa O'Brien will present an easy to follow hands-on workshop making anothotype prints using plant based emulsions which can be found in anybody's kitchen cupboard. This easy to follow workshop can become a user friendly part of your education program for a variety of age groups and abilities.

WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

BGEN CONFERENCE – 2026

DAY TWO: THURSDAY

Workshop 1: Green Skills Panel

What role are botanic gardens playing in developing green careers and how can we build on our existing programmes to support the next generation in green career opportunities and skills. Join us for a lively panel discussion to talk about this important issue with guest speakers:

Speaker one: Brian Heppenstall, Education and Careers Manager, The Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management

The ecology and environmental sector was predicted by Defra to grow by 20% between 2020 and 2030. Opportunities relating to areas such as ecology, conservation, science communications and environmental education require a range of knowledge and skills. Brian Heppenstall, who coordinates the GJfN project can provide personal perspectives of working in the sector as a Countryside Ranger, and as a qualified careers adviser.

Speaker two: Amy Leach, Community Engagement Manager, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh

Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh's community engagement team will share details of their work to upskill communities, who are often not equipped with the skills, information and actions to create change on a local scale. These activities include:

- equipping community leaders with the skills they need to engage communities in the topic of biodiversity loss
- skills sharing workshops in community growing settings, sharing the skills needed to continue growing in the changing climate
- delivering paid traineeships intended to diversify the range of voices speaking about biodiversity

Speaker three: Chris Meakin, Learning Supervisor, Westonbirt, The National Arboretum

Chris will share details about Westonbirt's range of programmes aimed at developing green skills and careers. This includes work experience placements that are multi-role, giving students the opportunity to work with 6 or more roles over a week, a green careers programme for GCSE and FE students, Arboretum apprentice activity walks, careers focussed home education sessions, Wild Westonbirt youth team practical conservation activities and the Community Woodland Planting Project – a 6-week green careers programme to involve tree care, practical conservation, and building woodland knowledge.

Speaker four: Carla Clark, Learning Officer, Royal Parks

The Royal Parks' Learning Team, under the Green Futures Project, has developed its first set of dedicated green careers resources, available both in print and online. The resources have been developed with four key aims:

- To explain what a 'green career' is, supported by key statistics and practical information
- To provide guidance on how to 'green' any career, regardless of sector.
- To highlight The Royal Parks as an organisation—its mission, impact, and the diversity of roles and individuals that sustain it – all of which are 'green' careers
- To showcase unique roles within The Royal Parks, emphasising the diverse pathways staff have taken, from A-levels to apprenticeships to university

Carla Clark will provide an overview of the project and resources developed.

WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

BGEN CONFERENCE – 2026

DAY TWO: THURSDAY

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The Digital tools- Hidden Nature Challenge, Seek and iNaturalist

How this feeds into community science programme research

How does this all feed into the Nature Park map- some time to have a go yourself

Workshop 3: The Power Of The Pause

Cath Ashby

In our fast-paced world, the simple act of pausing can be revolutionary. Join us to explore easy, everyday mindful practices that gently bring you back to the present moment — helping you feel more grounded, connected, and alive. When we pause, we create space: space to breathe, to listen, and to reconnect — with ourselves, with others, and with the planet. It's a skill we can all grow to feel more resourced because as the saying goes, you can't pour from an empty cup! Mindfulness is even recognized by the NHS as one of the Five Steps to Mental Wellbeing. So why not take a moment for yourself — and discover the power of the pause?

Cath is a BAMBA registered mindfulness teacher and nature connection practitioner who has worked in botanic garden horticulture and education for over 27 years.

**** WE WILL CONTACT YOU AT A LATER DATE TO ASK FOR YOUR WORKSHOP CHOICES****