

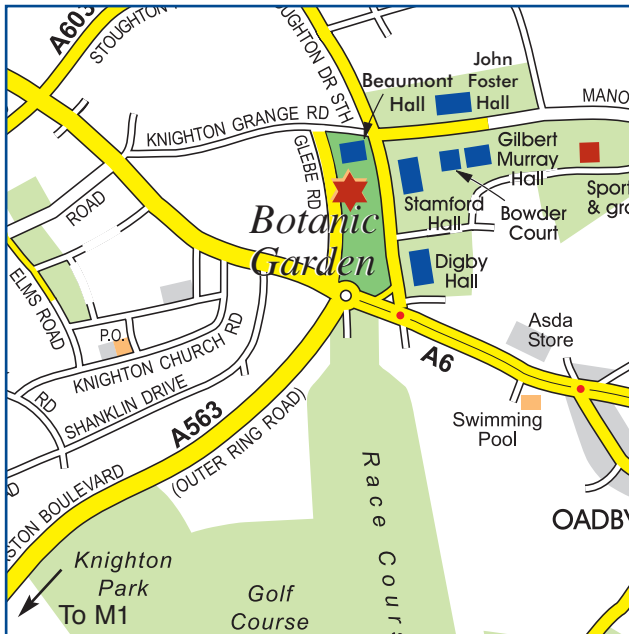
Garden Guide

How to get there

The Botanic Garden is situated about 3 miles south-east of Leicester city centre, opposite Leicester Racecourse.

By bus: from the city centre or railway station take a 29,30/31 or 80 and alight at Glebe Road.

By car: from M1 junction 21 follow the ring road A563 to its junction with the A6 at Oadby. The Botanic Garden backs on to the roundabout at this junction. Use the Glebe Road entrance.



Admission...

Monday - Friday (all year, except Christmas-New Year)
10am-4pm.

Saturday & Sunday (3rd weekend in March to 2nd weekend in November) 10am-4pm.

Entrance via Glebe Road (The Knoll) only.

For information about guided tours or the schools education programme, please phone or fax 0116-271-2933 (answerphone). General enquiries: 0116 271 7725.

Harold Martin *Botanic* Garden



University of
Leicester

TOURIST INFORMATION

Historical Notes

Foundation

The roots of the Botanic Garden go back to the sixth of October 1920, when the officers of the Botanical Section of the Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society were invited to undertake the work of establishing such a garden in the grounds of the then Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland College, now the University of Leicester. Construction and layout began early in 1921 under the principal guidance of Mr A.R. Horwood, the Honorary Secretary for scientific and technical aspects – in essence the first Curator. When completed in 1925, the Botanic Garden comprised a woodland garden (designed to display the typical flora of the Charnwood Forest), sections devoted to medicinal plants, culinary herbs and dye plants, a rock and water garden, British order beds, an experimental area planted with various grasses on different soils, and a general planting of interesting specimens.



Transfer to Oadby

The Garden remained at the College until 1947 when, owing to the erection of new buildings, it was moved to its present site in Oadby. Prior to 1760 the Oadby site consisted of open fields. With the Enclosure Act of 1760, hedgerows were planted and remnants of these may still be seen in the Garden. The central, roughly north-south axis of the Garden (Hedgerow Walk) follows the line of an old hedgerow and some of the trees, e.g. the Field Maple (*Acer campestre*) and the Ashes (*Fraxinus excelsior*) still exist today. A second hedgerow ran roughly east-west through the Limestone Garden (then the site of a small pond), and from there on eastwards through the Spinney and beyond. A third hedgerow followed a route from Hedgerow Walk eastwards through Hastings House. The solitary oak (*Quercus robur*) on the lawn of the Knoll is shown as part of a copse on the 1885 Ordnance Survey map. The Knoll Pond apparently stood adjacent to these trees at that time, although it is now located about 25 yards to the east. The development and landscaping of the grounds of the four houses early this century has almost obliterated the ridge and furrow topography so characteristic of Leicestershire grazing land, although traces of it may still be seen in the meadow in the winter when the grass is short.

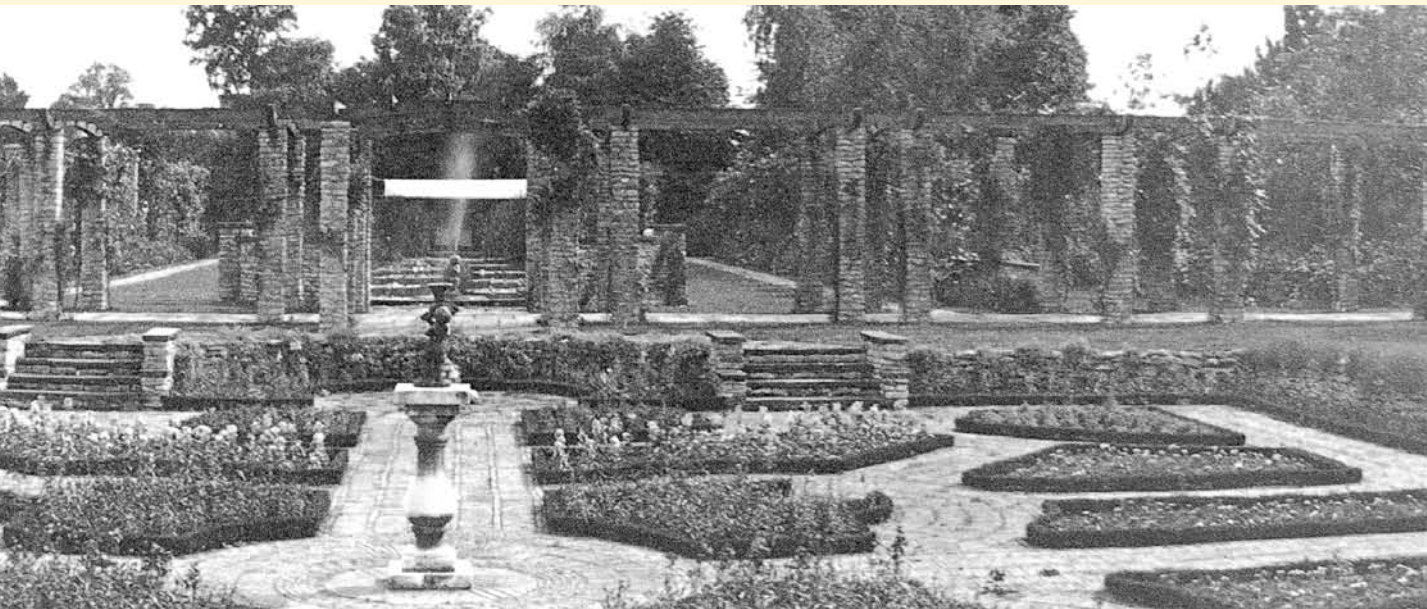


The Houses and Their Gardens

All four houses, Beaumont, Southmeade, The Knoll and Hastings, were designed by the architect Stockdale Harrison. The Sandstone Garden, built in Carboniferous sandstone from Derbyshire, dates from early on in the construction period. It is apparently modelled on the stone gardens perfected some 500 years earlier by the Buddhist priests of Kyoto in Japan. Indeed, Mr. Brice is reputed to have been advised by Japanese experts on its design. Only the small cave and waterfall in the main rockwork are not of Japanese influence but represent a survival of the Victorian tradition of grotto construction. The Limestone Garden in its present form was apparently added in about 1930,



after Mr. Brice had left. It is built in waterworn Westmoreland limestone in an early version of the 'outcrop' style in which an attempt is made to show the rocks arising from the ground naturally. There is, however, still a strong influence of the older 'terrace' style in which courses of rocks are used to support beds of soil. In its heyday the Beaumont garden was reputed to have been the finest garden in and around Leicestershire; it employed ten gardeners – five outside and five in the greenhouses. Today for economic reasons, the grounds of all four houses are maintained by only five gardeners. With the purchase of the Knoll, a programme to unify the four gardens began. By 1967/8 the property boundaries between the four houses had been removed as far as was practicable, and the present character of the Garden had begun to take shape. Current developments and management are directed towards fulfilling more effectively the Garden's roles in the areas of research, education, conservation and amenity.



1 Water Garden

The Water Garden is flanked by pillars and ropes on which are trained climbing and rambling roses. In the pool grow a range of water lilies, among which the pale pink 'Marliacea Rosea' is outstanding. A variety of climbers scramble over the pergola which crosses the axis of the water garden at its northern end. These include a purple leaved form of the Grape vine, whose dark purple grapes yield a harsh juice.

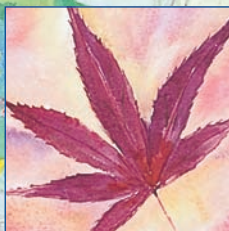


5 Beaumont House and Terrace

Beaumont House (known as 'Middlemeade' until 1947) was built in 1904 for Mr F.S. Brice, a Leicester hosiery manufacturer. The sheltered south-facing wall is home to some tender plants, such as the evergreen *Magnolia grandiflora*, a native of the southern United States whose sweet scented flowers open a few at a time from July to late autumn. Adjacent is a specimen of *Rosa banksiae* 'Lutea', whose double yellow flowers appear in June. The terrace beds in front of the house have been planted with evergreen, summer-flowering shrubs, chiefly from the Mediterranean region.

6 Sandstone Garden

Lying between the two lawns in front of Beaumont House, the Sandstone Garden is dominated by a collection of Japanese Maples, cultivars of both *Acer palmatum* and *A. japonicum*. Cultivated by the Japanese for centuries, these species have produced a wide array of forms differing in leaf colour and shape. Particularly impressive is a specimen of *A. japonicum* 'Aureum' which carries golden yellow leaves throughout the summer; and in the autumn 'Aconitifolium' often provides a splendid display of turkey-red leaves. In late winter the clean trunks of the maples are complemented by large drifts of the lavender-coloured *Crocus tomasianus*.



2 Sunken Garden





Beyond the Pergola is the Sunken Garden. This is a parterre of small beds laid out on a brick pavement, each bed edged with a dwarf form of Box. A traditional rotation of spring and summer planting is maintained in these beds.

3 Conservation Garden & NCCPG Collections

Bordered by a Yew hedge, the Conservation Garden contains the National Collection of hardy



Key

Greenhouse: 
Pond: 
Offices: 
Research/service: 
Toilets: T

3 Conservation Garden & NCCPG Collections

Bordered by a Yew hedge, the Conservation Garden contains the National Collection of hardy Fuchsia, which are at their best from late August to October. Three other National Collections are held in the Botanic Garden and separate leaflets are available for them all.

- Aubrieta (stopping point 8) -- April to May
- Skimmia (stopping point 11) -- all year
- Lawson's Cypress (stopping point 20) -- all year

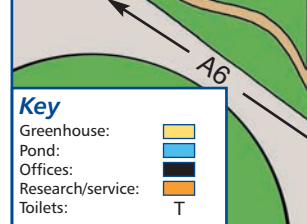


4 Succulent House

Succulence in plants is associated with very arid or salty environments and involves the production of a group of special characters, such as: massive fleshy, water-storing organs; spines or sharp-pointed leaves; and often a special mode of photosynthesis whereby carbon dioxide is taken into the plant at night, rather than during the day. The display contains not only members of the cactus family but also other plants that have adopted a similar habit. A separate leaflet provides more details.



display of turkey-red leaves. In late winter the clean trunks of the maples are complemented by large drifts of the lavender-coloured *Crocus tomasianus*.



7 Limestone Garden

The Limestone Garden is dominated by a well-grown specimen of Bristlecone Pine, the tallest in the country (9.1m in 1981). In the wild the species grows at high elevations in the Californian Sierra Nevada, where some trees have been dated as being about 5000 years old, among the oldest living things on the planet. The Limestone Garden itself is laid out on a geographical theme, with the mountain floras of America, Europe and Asia all represented. A smaller island towards the northern end contains British species.

8 Alpine House

One side of the Alpine House contains plunge beds in which is grown a diverse array of alpins. The other side features a planting of species that occur wild only in the Balearic Islands. Just in front of the Alpine House is the National Collection of *Aubrieta* (see separate leaflet).

9 Southmeade House

Southmeade House was built in 1928 for Mr Brice when he retired and left Beaumont. Its terrace provides a sheltered pocket for plants from Mediterranean climates. Here may be seen a large specimen of *Azara microphylla* from Chile, *Jamesia americana* (a white-flowered relative of *Hydrangea* from California), and the Moroccan Broom, with yellow, pineapple-scented flowers, from North Africa.



10 Herb Garden

Dominated by a pair of Mulberry Trees, and edged with hedges of dwarf lavender and rosemary, the Herb Garden is planted with medicinal and culinary plants, often aromatic members of the mint family, such as sage, bergamot, *Nepeta* and thyme. Complementing the mints are other grey-leaved aromatic plants, such as various species of wormwood and *Santolina*.

11 Order Beds

Between Southmeade Lawn and Hastings Glasshouse lie the Order Beds. About 30 flowering plant families are displayed, representing all the larger ones native to the British Isles. Our beds are rather unorthodox in that they are designed in the form of two 'snakes', one for dicotyledon families and one for monocotyledon families. On the north-facing side of the wall and by the western hedge are perimeter beds which house the National Collection of the genus *Skimmia* (see separate leaflet).



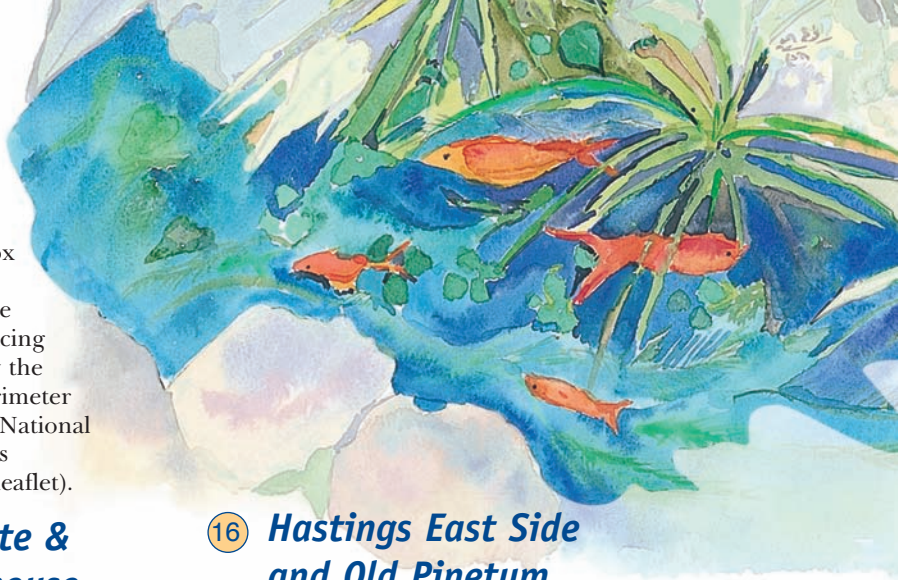
12 Warm-temperate & Tropical Glasshouse

Featured in the warm-temperate section is a variety of species, including the Bird-of-Paradise Flower and a small collection of palms and cycads. The tropical section recreates a rainforest environment but also displays a collection of economically important plants, such as banana, coffee, rice, sugar cane, mango and pineapple. It also features a small display about Alfred Russel Wallace and Henry Walter Bates, two former residents of Leicester who made significant contributions to our understanding of how evolution works. See the separate leaflet for more details.

13 The Knoll, Lawn and Pond

The Knoll was constructed for Mr William Winterton, a local brick manufacturer, in 1907 with specially made tudor bricks and roofed with local Swithland slates. Later occupied by Mr E.S. Fox (of

Glacier Mints), the house was bought by the University in 1964. In the middle of the lawn is an old oak, a field tree dating from the last century. Nearby, is a pond planted with aquatic and marsh plants, including *Gunnera*



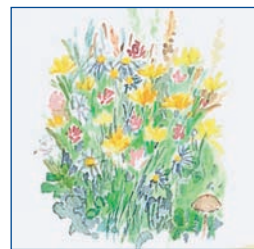
16 Hastings East Side and Old Pinetum

Many of the Garden's coniferous species are to be found in this area. Notable specimens include the following:

- Giant Sequoias, including a curious pendulous form, that looks very gothic;
- Dawn Redwood, a plant known only as fossils until living trees were discovered in the mountains of China in 1941;
- Grand Fir, the tallest tree in the garden at 24m.
- Highland Pine, a native variant of the Scots Pine and collected from the Black Wood of Rannoch in Perthshire, one of the few remaining stations of the formerly widespread Caledonian pine forest.

17 Meadow

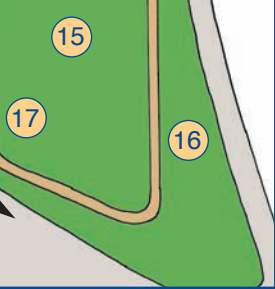
The Meadow is quite a good example of 'unimproved', neutral grassland, now rare in Leicestershire, and contains over eighty native British species, including Adder's Tongue Fern, an indicator of undisturbed pasture, and Yellow Rattle, a species which parasitises many of the meadow grasses.



18 Old Hedgerow

Bordering the meadow to the west is a line of trees, some of which, i.e. the Field Maple and the Common Ash are the remnants of an old hedgerow dating back to the last century.





13 *The Knoll, Lawn and Pond*

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Glacier Mints), the house was bought by the University in 1964. In the middle of the lawn is an old oak, a field tree dating from the last century. Nearby, is a pond planted with aquatic and marsh plants, including *Gunnera tinctoria*, a Chilean species with huge leaves and prickly leaf-stalks. Overlooking the pond is a specimen of our native Downy Birch, similar to the Silver Birch but with hairy young shoots and twice as many chromosomes.



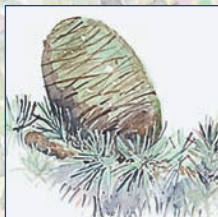
14 *Hastings House and Terrace*

Hastings House (known as 'Nether Close' until 1947) was built in 1902 for Mr Stevens, a Leicester hosiery manufacturer. The design is apparently based on that of Old Ragdale Hall, near the Leicestershire village of Rotherby. Warmth-loving species grow against the wall of the house and fronting the the terrace is the largest *Wisteria sinensis* in the garden, almost certainly dating from the original planting in the early 1900s.



15 *Cedar Grove*

On the far side of Hastings House lawn is a grove of Cedars. Left to right they are: the grey-leaved variant of the Atlas Cedar from North Africa; in the middle is the Cedar of Lebanon from the Near East; and on the right is the Deodar Cedar from the Himalayas. Across the path further to the west is a young specimen of a fourth species, the Cyprus Cedar, planted in 1982 by T.G. Tutin, Emeritus Professor of Botany at Leicester University, to commemorate the founding of the Botanic Garden in 1921.



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18 *Old Hedgerow*

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19 *The Paddock*

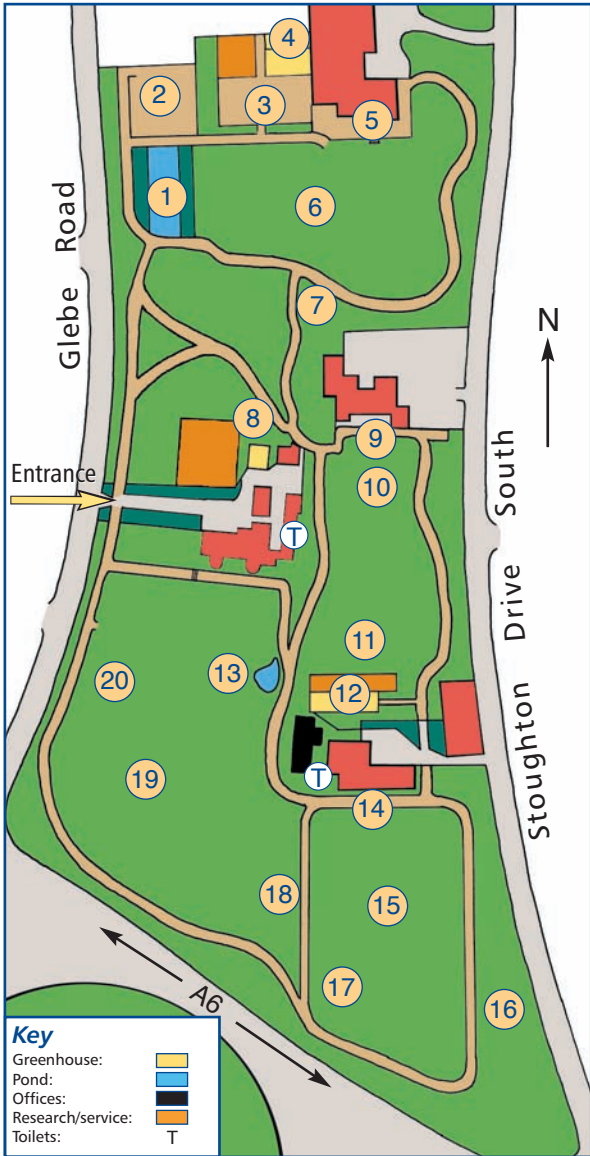
Formerly a paddock, this area now contains a planting of trees characteristic of northern hemisphere woodlands, including species of birch, alder, maple and sweet gum, the last displaying impressive autumn colouring. Providing an evergreen accent are various tree heaths, bearing sprays of white flowers. Of special interest in the westernmost planting is a group of Lodgepole Pines, collected in the wild from five localities ranging from Alaska to Oregon. They show genetic differentiation in height very clearly, with the northern collections being smaller than those originating from further south.



20 *Holly Walk and the Tennis Lawn*

Leading northwards from the heather beds on the far western side is Holly Walk, so named because most of the garden's collection of hollies is planted along its route. The adjacent lawn (which used to be a tennis court,) has been planted with part of the National Collection of Lawson's Cypress, a temperate rain-forest species (see separate leaflet).





Key

- Greenhouse:
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Friends of the Botanic Garden

The principal aim of this association is to support the development of the Garden's amenities and plant collections. Members' benefits include:

- Special access to the Garden when it is closed to the public.
- Meetings, held once a month and comprising lectures, demonstrations and visits to other gardens or places of horticultural interest.
- Newsletters, carrying news items, notices of meetings and an article on plants or features of current interest in the Garden.
- Plant exchanges. The association provides a forum for the free exchange of plants among members.
- Garden Guide. All members receive a free Garden Guide leaflet.

How to Join

Anyone over the age of 18 may become a member by completing an application form and paying the annual subscription. Subscriptions are normally payable on 1st January each year, but new members may join at any time. Memberships bought after September are valid through to 31st December the following year. Families may subscribe at special rates.

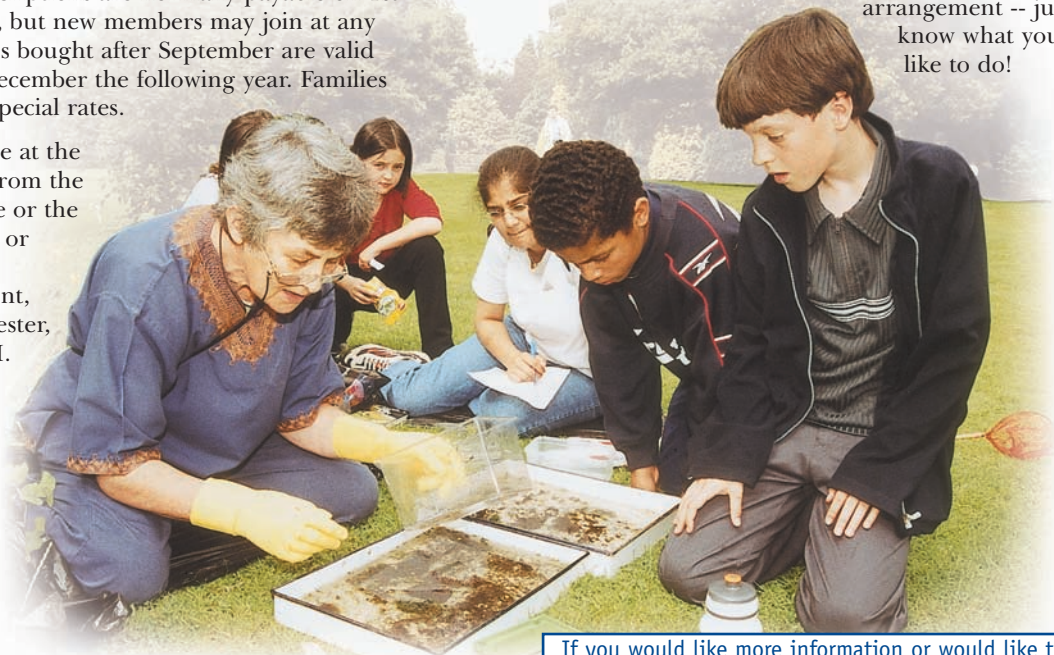
Forms are available at the Botanic Garden (from the information centre or the main greenhouse) or from the Director, Biology Department, University of Leicester, Leicester LE1 7RH.

Education programme: SEED

SEED (Support for Education in Environment and Development) is the education programme of the University of Leicester Botanic Garden. It has been set up to develop and promote the Garden and its satellite Attenborough Arboretum as an educational resource, with an emphasis on bringing a global perspective to the National Curriculum.

A wide range of activities and resources is available for visiting schools, youth groups and teachers. Activities that are currently staffed by us include:

- Whole World Cake Treasure Hunt -- a hunt for the ingredients of a cake. These are collected from around the garden and their origins, uses and production are explained.
- Global Christmas Pudding -- a variant of the Whole World Cake, but developed especially for the Christmas season.
- Arboretum Adventures -- a chance to find out more about the natural environment by exploring the Attenborough Arboretum.
- Other activities and topics (e.g. environments, mathematics and RE) may be covered by arrangement -- just let us know what you would like to do!



If you would like more information or would like to arrange a visit, please ring 0116-271-2933 (answerphone).