

Press Pack: National Plant Collections

There are around 700 [National Plant Collections](#) in the UK, covering genera from *Abies* to *Zingiber* and containing over 95,000 garden plants. They come in all sizes, from miniature orchids to mighty oaks, and are found in all corners of the country.

They are living plant libraries, showcasing the amazing diversity of our nation's cultivated plants. They are created, and curated, by individuals or organisations who are passionate about protecting the diversity of the nation's rich flora.

Anyone can be a collection holder – they include individuals, local authority parks, plant nurseries and some of the UK's most famous botanic gardens, such as the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew. You don't need a huge garden or plot of land to hold a collection – some are held in the tiniest of spaces, such as greenhouses, allotments or even indoors.

The National Plant Collections are available for the public to visit and admire, either by appointment, on special open days, or as part of a garden open to the public. To find out more about your nearest collection, use Plant Heritage's [interactive map](#).

Accreditation of new collections takes place four times every year, in March, June, September and November. The National Plant Collections are key to ensuring the future success of the UK's garden plants, so they can be enjoyed by future generations to come.

And for those who don't have time or space to start a National Plant Collection, you can always [sponsor the National Plant Collections](#) instead!

Examples of National Plant Collections

***Echinopsis* (Abbey Brook hybrid & Schick collections): Derbyshire (Abbey Brook Cactus Nursery)**

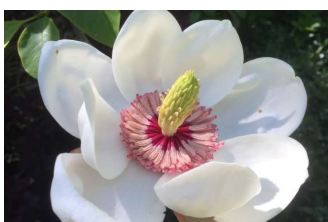


This is one of the seven collections of cacti and succulents held by Brian Fearn, who started Abbey Brook Nursery whilst an undergraduate. With over 60 years of cactus growing experience, Brian and his wife Gill regularly win gold medals for the quality and range of plants on display at various shows.

The CITES legislation, which restricted the import and export of cacti and succulents to protect wild species from exploitation, places additional value on collections already in the UK as a source of plant material. Brian welcomes visitors to the nursery, gives talks and researches his collections.

Image above: *Echinopsis* 'Gilly's favourite', credit Abbey Brook Cactus Nursery

***Magnolia*: Bodnant, Wales (The National Trust)**



The Magnolia trees in the collection at NT Bodnant go back a long way. Many are over 100 years old and are linked to some of the most famous names of our horticultural past. The garden's owner in the early 1900s was Lord Aberconway, who later became president of the RHS. He commissioned plant hunters to send back plants and seeds from their expeditions, many of which are still in the gardens today.

This was one of the first National Plant Collections to get accredited in 1981, in recognition of the significance of these magnificent trees.

Image above: *Magnolia sieboldii*, credit The National Trust (seek permission for use)

***Narcissus*, cultivars: Sussex (Plant Heritage's Sussex Group)**



From a small plot in his Mayfield garden, Noel Burr, an amateur breeder and exhibitor of daffodils, registered 58 cultivars with the International Daffodil Register. Burr, who died in 2017, named many of his bulbs after local towns and villages in Sussex, such as Danehill and Chelwood Gate.

“We began this collection after one of our members approached us worried that this heritage could so easily be lost,” says Dr Gary Firth, the chairman of Plant Heritage's Sussex Group. “We have 13 volunteers holding the Collection and have been able to source and locate 20 cultivars so far. We hope that others may still be available in New Zealand, Australia and America, where Burr exported many of his cultivars.”

Image above: *Narcissus* 'Firehills', credit Plant Heritage's Sussex Group

***Malus domestica*: Cumbria (South Lakeland Orchard Group)**



The South Lakeland Orchard Group (SLOG) is a voluntary community group formed in 2007. One of its aims is the preservation of old local varieties of fruit. An orchard site was acquired in 2011 and planted with more than 160 apple and pear cultivars in county rows, including one each for Cumbria, Lancashire and Yorkshire heritage apple cultivars.

What makes this Collection unique is that it holds all 60 known Cumbria and Lancashire apple cultivars. They are being validated by DNA analysis to ensure a comprehensive and authentic reference collection of North-West English apple cultivars.

Image above: *Malus domestica* 'Lancashire Pippin', credit Andy Gilchrist