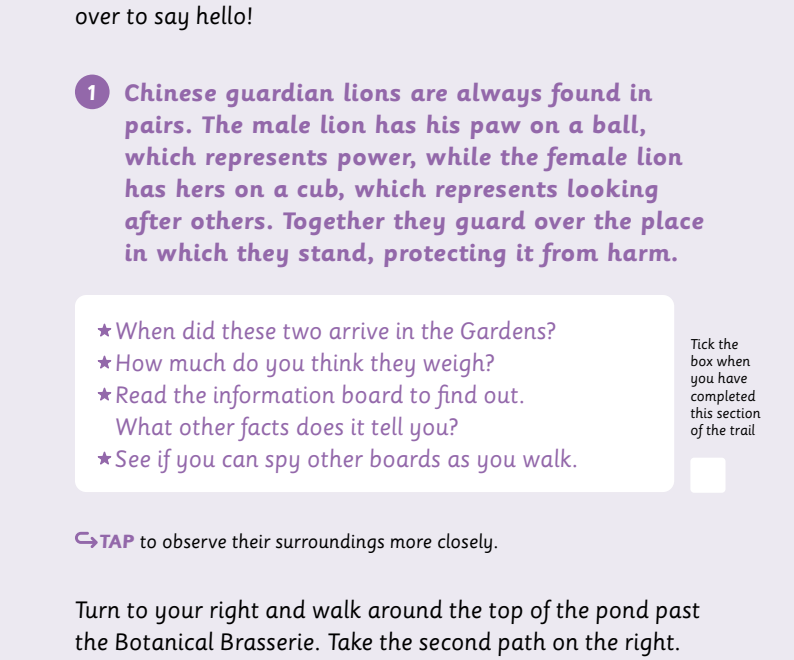




Royal Botanic Gardens Kew

Spring family trail

Welcome to this 45-minute spring trail. Spring has sprung in the Gardens, so come and take a closer look!



You will now be walking past a large mound on your right, with the Temple of Aeolus on the top.

2 This mound is covered in wild spring flowers. Have you ever wondered why springtime flowers burst out when they do? Plants know spring has arrived through a combination of signals: longer days, warmer temperatures, sunlight and

Start at Victoria Gate

As you exit the ticket barriers, turn right. Ahead of you is a pond. Can you spot the beautiful stone lions? Make your way over to say hello!

1 Chinese guardian lions are always found in pairs. The male lion has his paw on a ball, which represents power, while the female lion has hers on a cub, which represents looking after others. Together they guard over the place in which they stand, protecting it from harm.

- ★ When did these two arrive in the Gardens?
- ★ How much do you think they weigh?
- ★ Read the information board to find out. What other facts does it tell you?
- ★ See if you can spy other boards as you walk.

Tick the box when you have completed this section of the trail

➡ **TAP** to observe their surroundings more closely.

Turn to your right and walk around the top of the pond past the Botanical Brasserie. Take the second path on the right. You will now be walking past a large mound on your right, with the Temple of Aeolus on the top.

2 This mound is covered in wild spring flowers. Have you ever wondered why springtime flowers burst out when they do? Plants know spring has arrived through a combination of signals: longer days, warmer temperatures, sunlight and moisture. These signals trigger hormones in the plants that tell them it's time to bloom.

- ★ How many different flowers can you spot?
- ★ What colours can you see?
- ★ There are lots of daffodils here. How many different types do you think there are?

➡ **TAP** to see how many flowers you can match.

Keep walking along this path until you reach the Woodland Garden on your right. The pathway starts by the Chinese nettle tree. Pause and admire its tear-shaped leaves before you turn right into this garden.

3 The Woodland Garden feels like a shaded and secret place. Walk along the twisty paths and enjoy its secluded and serene feel. It is a place full of springtime colour.

- ★ Stop and smell the flowers here. Can you describe what they smell like?
- ★ Stay still and close your eyes. Feel the breeze and listen to the birds chirping and the new leaves rustling.

➡ **TAP** to take a journey up to the Temple.

When you are ready, go back down through the Woodland Garden and pop out onto the main path. Look just to your left to see the stunning black walnut tree.

4 Have you ever wondered where walnuts come from? Well, now you know – they come from black walnut trees just like this one. They won't be ready until the autumn, but this is the perfect time to watch this tree burst into leaf after its long winter sleep. Its wood is finely veined making it very strong, and therefore very valuable to furniture makers – it's even been used to make aircraft propellers! This wonderful tree is one of the oldest in the Gardens and was planted in 1740.

- ★ Imagine all the things this tree has seen in its lifetime.

Turn around and take a small step over to the salvia border on the right of the Rock Garden.

➡ **TAP** to go on an insect safari.

After you have finished your insect safari, turn around to look at the Rock Garden.

5 The Rock Garden at Kew is the oldest and largest in the world. It was built in 1882 and is just over an acre (400 square metres) in size! This garden mimics life in six different mountain regions in the world. The Rock Garden is a vital resource for our research. Over 70% of the plants displayed here are grown from wild-collected seed, meaning it is our largest outdoor area of plants collected by our scientists.

- ★ Have a wander around the meandering paths and see how many regions you can find.
- ★ Compare the different plants in each region.
- ★ What features do they have?
- ★ Why do you think that the plants have evolved to look as they do?

➡ **TAP** to discover the relationship between the rocks and the plants here.

When you have finished exploring this fascinating area, look for the small arch-shaped glass building at the top of the Rock Garden. This is the Davies Alpine House. Head on over!

- ★ Stop and listen. What can you hear? Follow the sound of the waterfall.

6 Imagine this waterfall was high up in a mountainous area. This kind of environment is so high up that even hardy trees can't survive. The Davies Alpine House is home to some of the world's most resilient plants. These plants have adapted to endure the severe conditions of the Earth's poles, the Arctic, the Alps or the Andes.

- Take a good look at the plants inside this special glasshouse.

In the wild, alpine plants spend the winter asleep (dormant), dry and protected from extreme temperatures by a blanket of snow. In spring, the snow melts, providing moisture and exposing the plants to light. The short growing season means plants must flower and set seed quickly. They require plenty of light and cool, constantly moving air.

➡ **TAP** to find out more about how climate change could affect these plants.

Want to keep this adventure going?

- ★ Visit the waterlily pond just behind the Davies Alpine House. Can you see signs of spring growth here?
- ★ Or check out the Grass Garden next door. The warmer spring weather is just what is needed to prompt the regrowth of these special plants.
- ★ Keep wandering around the Gardens to spot more signs of spring.

Continue to enjoy the Gardens with one of our themed trails.

More activities...



1 The lions are standing guard over a beautiful area bursting with signs of spring next to the Palm House Pond.

- ★ Stand between them and have a look at what they see. Bright flowers, fresh green leaves, baby birds – what can you spot here?
- ★ Take it in turns to describe in a sentence what you can see and create your very own springtime poem!

➡ **BACK TO TRAIL**



2 Match the pictures with flowers you can see on the mound.

daffodil ☐ dogtooth violets ☐ celandine ☐

wood anemone ☐ crocus ☐ bluebell ☐

If there are any you can't find, don't worry – you can look out for them in the Woodland Garden instead, which is your next stop.

➡ **BACK TO TRAIL**

3 Before you leave this lovely spot, walk up the steep hill to the Temple of Aeolus. Aeolus was the ruler of the winds in Greek mythology.

- ★ Is it windy up here?
- ★ Admire the views – what can you see from high up?
- ★ Close your eyes again. How does it feel?
- ★ How is it different from down in the Woodland Garden?

➡ **BACK TO TRAIL**

4 Look ahead of you and by the wall, just slightly to the right, you will see clouds of colourful flowers. This is the salvia border. There are 1,000 species of salvia, and they are incredibly diverse, with colourful flowers and scented foliage. This makes them very attractive to pollinators. Pollination is when pollen from one flower is taken to another, helping the plants to produce seeds to make more plants. There are over 1,500 insects that are known to pollinate flowers, including 270 different types of bees in the UK. But it's not just bees! Flies, hoverflies, bee-flies, beetles, wasps, ants, butterflies and moths are also useful pollinators.

- ★ What insects can you see here?
- ★ Do an insect safari and count all the different insects that you can see pollinating these flowers.

➡ **BACK TO TRAIL**

5 The rocks are made from sandstone.

- ★ Gently touch them. Be careful not to touch any of the plants, though, because they are very delicate. How do the stones feel?
- ★ What is special about these stones?
- ★ How do you think they can support the plants that grow in them?

The stones are covered in a network of cracks. These crevices provide shelter for windblown seeds, replicating cracks in the mountains where the seeds come from. They also collect rainwater and dust, which is what the seeds need to start to grow.

➡ **BACK TO TRAIL**

6 So, what happens if temperatures continue to rise with global warming? What will happen to these plants that have adapted to grow in these very cold conditions? Kew scientists are studying the relationship between plants and fungi in the Alps and have discovered that fungi help plants to regrow after changes to the environment. Fungi can help ecosystems overcome or recover from the stress of rising temperatures. Isn't that amazing?

Perhaps you could do some extra research at home about the special relationship between fungi and plants!

➡ **BACK TO TRAIL**

