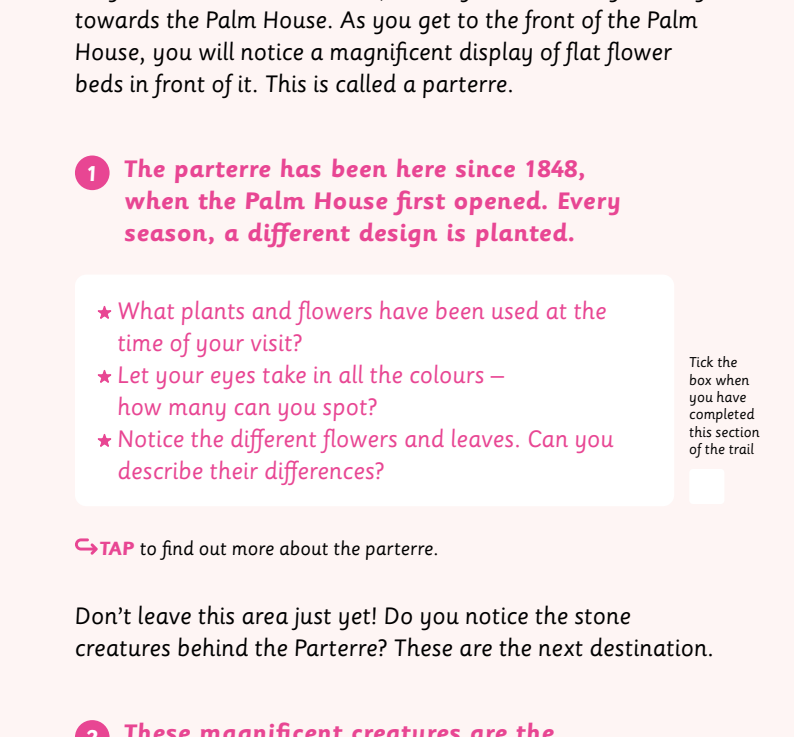




Royal Botanic Gardens Kew

Summer family trail

Welcome to this 45-minute summer trail. Kew Gardens really comes alive at this time of year, so get ready to engage all your senses!



Key		
Trail route	Toilets	Shop
Café	Accessible toilets	Water
Restaurant	Baby change	Information

Start at Victoria Gate

As you exit the ticket barriers, turn right and make your way towards the Palm House. As you get to the front of the Palm House, you will notice a magnificent display of flat flower beds in front of it. This is called a parterre.

- 1 The parterre has been here since 1848, when the Palm House first opened. Every season, a different design is planted.**

- ★ What plants and flowers have been used at the time of your visit?
- ★ Let your eyes take in all the colours – how many can you spot?
- ★ Notice the different flowers and leaves. Can you describe their differences?

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

➡TAP to find out more about the parterre.

Don't leave this area just yet! Do you notice the stone creatures behind the Parterre? These are the next destination.

- 2 These magnificent creatures are the Queen's Beasts. Throughout history, monarchs have used beasts to symbolise their ancestry and family allegiances. These Beasts are made of Portland stone and were created for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953.**

- ★ Walk along this grand parade of Beasts. How many are there?
- ★ Can you recognise what kind of creatures they are?
- ★ Some of them are very unusual, so use the information boards to help you. Get creative and see if you can mimic them with your body. What would you imagine they sound like?

➡TAP to explore how plants are used in heraldry too.

Walk towards the Waterlily House, but before you reach it, turn right and walk until you come to a circular flowerbed. Turn left here to find yourself at the bottom end of The Great Broad Walk. Walk up this gorgeous pathway until you spot four metal fir cones, raised up high on metal frames in the corners of the flower beds. Turn right here and keep walking, bearing right on the pathway ahead. Smell the air... can you smell the curry plant? Follow the scent until you find it!

- 3 This evergreen shrub is native to central Chile, where it forms dense clumps in the wild. It was introduced to the UK in the early 19th century and grows very well here.**

- ★ What part of the plant do you think this smell is coming from? It comes from the fallen leaves, especially when they are damp.
- ★ Why do you think this plant has developed this strong scent?

➡TAP to find out more about other smelly plants.

Retrace your steps back the way you came then continue along the path as it bears right. Look out for a small pathway on your right. This leads to the Ice House.

- 4 In the hot summer months, we all rely on our fridges to keep our food cool, but what happened in Georgian times? Well, you are now standing by Kew's ancient fridge – the Ice House! Walk inside and feel how much colder it is.**

- ★ What temperature do you think it is in here?

The staff from Kew Palace used to haul up the ice from the lakes and store it here ready to make summer drinks, and even ice cream!

➡TAP to discover how Kew scientists are using ice today!

Exit the Ice House and turn right. A short way up the path, you will find our next stop.

- 5 Can you see a very old tree propped up? This is a Japanese Pagoda tree and it's one of Kew's oldest and most iconic trees. It was planted in 1762 and used to be 15 metres tall. Now, only its bottom branch remains, but it is still going strong even though it is over 250 years old! Despite its name, this tree originates from China and Korea.**

- ★ Have a close look at the tree – how is it being supported?
- ★ There is a much younger Japanese Pagoda tree behind you as you look at the old one. Compare the two – what are the similarities and the differences between them?

➡TAP to reveal why old trees are still important.

When you have finished your story continue up the path. Soon you will start to hear some unusual music. You have now reached The Hive! This is our last stop.

- 6 Listen to the music and notice the flashing lights that illuminate this huge metal structure. This unique experience is connected to a real beehive at Kew which sends information to The Hive relating to the activity of the bees. This is translated into the music and lights you are experiencing.**

- ★ Can you hear the different layers of sound?
- ★ What different jobs do you think the bees are doing?

Every sound is in the key of C (not B!) – the key that bees buzz in! There are 1,000 lights which glow according to the vibrations the bees make.

- ★ Look at the lights – how busy is the hive today?

➡TAP to get your dancing shoes on!

Did you know that there are over 270 different bee species in the UK, including honey bees, bumble bees and solitary bees. They are one of the most important pollinators for food crops, but wild species are in decline due to disease, extreme weather, habitat loss and climate change. Kew scientists are researching the health of bees to help us understand what we can do to help them.

Want to keep this adventure going?

- ★ Visit the Evolution Garden to see gorgeous horticultural displays and check out more flowers.
- ★ Or feel the heat and pop into the Princess of Wales Conservatory to look at plants from hotter climates.

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

More activities...

- 1** The parterre was designed by William Andrews Nesfield, who created an intricate geometric pattern of beds.

- ★ What shapes can you see?
- ★ Compare one side to the other.
- ★ What do you notice?
- ★ Is it symmetrical?

During WWI, the parterre was dug up to grow vegetables to help with the war effort and to combat food shortages. It was planted with onions!

- ★ Imagine that you are planting vegetables here – what would you choose to grow and why?

➡BACK TO TRAIL

- 2** Plants have also been used in heraldry throughout history. The rose is England's national flower, adopted as a sign of peace after the War of the Roses. The thistle is used as part of the Scottish coat of arms. The shamrock is Ireland's national flower and Wales is symbolised by the leek or daffodil!

- ★ Do you know any more from other countries?
- ★ As you walk around the Gardens, see if you can find any of these flowers and plants. If you were to choose a flower to symbolise your family, what would you choose and why?

➡BACK TO TRAIL



- 3** There are many scented plants in the world; some sweet and some stinky!

- ★ Can you match these plants with their smelly description?

Titan arum – this is also known as the corpse flower and only blooms once a decade!

Ginkgo tree – the oldest living tree species in the world, the cases of its large seeds smell like rancid butter!

Rose – so far, 400 chemicals have been discovered in the scent of this flower and Kew scientists are studying many of these chemicals.

Rosemary – the essential oils from this herb can be used to treat headaches.

➡BACK TO TRAIL

- 4** Did you know that Kew has a seed bank? Seeds from all over the world are kept there, preserved for the future. The seeds are fast frozen and stored in sub-zero vaults underground. This process is called cryopreservation. Sadly, many threatened plants have seeds that can't be stored in this way.

- ★ How many seeds do you think are in the Millennium Seed Bank?
- ★ How many plant species do you think there are in the world?
- ★ Why is it important to collect and preserve as many seeds as we can?

Maybe on your next day out, you could visit Wakehurst, Kew's wild botanic garden in Sussex, and visit the Millennium Seed Bank while you are there!

➡BACK TO TRAIL

- 5** The oldest trees in the Gardens are looked after by Kew's 'tree gang', who tend to all of the 14,000 types of tree that live here. The later life of a tree is often seen as the most important, because older trees create unique microclimates around them which provide valuable habitats for rare and endangered species and enable inter-relationships between many different plants and animals, below and above ground.

Use your imagination to create a story about what the tree might have seen over the many years it's been here. Take it in turns to each add a sentence to this amazing tale as you stand beside this remarkable tree.

➡BACK TO TRAIL

- 6** Does this music make you feel like dancing? Well, did you know that bees communicate through dance? Honeybees send out scouts who travel up to 14 km to find the best nectar. When they return, they perform a 'round dance' or a 'waggle dance'. A round dance lets the rest of the hive know there is a food source nearby, whereas a waggle dance communicates where and how far away the food source is.

- ★ Why don't you try a round dance or a waggle dance?
- ★ Can you explain something you want to say just through dance alone? Have a go!

➡BACK TO TRAIL

Thank you for visiting today.

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