

Press release: 18 July 2024

Fulham Palace Compton collection receives prestigious National Plant Collection status from Plant Heritage.

Fulham Palace Trust is thrilled to announce that its Bishop Compton collection has been granted National Plant Collection status by Plant Heritage. This recognises the work of the Trust in assembling a comprehensive collection of plants first cultivated at the Palace during the tenure of Bishop Henry Compton (1675-1713).



Compton was a keen botanist and probably the most important Bishop in the cultivation of Fulham Palace's garden. He was one of many plant collectors whose passion for 'new' plant discoveries was made possible through the exploitation of natural resources and Indigenous and enslaved people around the world.

Although there were reports of Compton cultivating over one thousand plant species at the Palace, the exact layout of his garden is unknown. However, the Sloane Herbarium at the Natural History Museum and the herbarium at Oxford University hold specimens of plants grown at Fulham Palace by Compton and his gardeners.

In 2017 Fulham Palace Trust embarked on a research project to identify some of the plants that had been cultivated by Compton. By painstakingly checking the herbarium volumes at the Natural History Museum, Dr Mark Spencer was able to find evidence of 200 species that were grown at Fulham Palace during Compton's tenure. Later, an additional 85 species were identified at the Oxford University herbaria. There were challenges in sourcing certain species, but Lucy Hart, the Palace's head gardener, was able to source 89 species from the combined list for the new Compton border. Specimens include species that were grown in England for the first time at Fulham Palace, including the notable *Magnolia virginiana*.



Visitors to Fulham Palace can experience the newly re-planted collection first hand by visiting the Compton border to the south and south west of the walled garden. Visitors to Fulham Palace can also view some of Compton's original plant specimens on loan from Oxford University in the Palace's museum until June 2025.

Lucy Hart | Head gardener

The Bishop Compton collection tells the important story of botanical introductions to the UK and is an integral part of the Palace's long history. We are incredibly grateful to the team at Plant Heritage for their support.

I'd also like to thank the specialist growers and nurseries for helping supply the plants, alongside Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and Chelsea Physic Garden who donated specimens to bolster the collection.

Finally, we are ever grateful to the Lear Associates, Dr Mark Spencer, the Natural History Museum and the Department of Biology, Oxford University for their enthusiasm, guidance and support in helping to bring this story to life.

-ENDS-

Notes for editors

For further information & high res images please contact:

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About Fulham Palace

Fulham Palace is the historic home of the Bishops of London. For centuries, the Palace and surrounding estate served as a country retreat for the bishops and their families before becoming the Bishop's permanent residence in the early 20th century. The last Bishop moved out in 1973, and the Palace and 13 acre botanical garden are now managed by the Fulham Palace Trust, an independent charity dedicated to engaging people and providing an insight, through the stories of the Bishops of London, into over 1,300 years of English history and to become one of Great Britain's most loved and inspiring historic houses and gardens.

How to get there

Main entrance: the end of Bishop's Avenue by gates to Bishop's Park

Bus: 14, 74, 220, 414, 430

Tube: Putney Bridge (from the station follow the Thames Path west along the river through Bishop's Park, midway through the park is the Bishop's Avenue gate, exit through gate and immediately right into Fulham Palace grounds)

Parking: metered parking on Bishops Avenue