

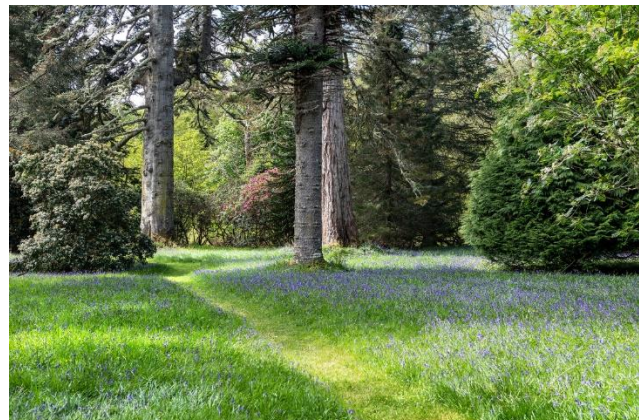
Press release: 29 October 2020. For immediate release.

## **Armadale Castle to help save endangered trees in new partnership with the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh**

- Armadale Castle invited to join prestigious International Conifer Conservation Programme
- Over 100 endangered trees to be planted in Armadale's historic gardens
- Initiative brings new opportunities for volunteering and learning
- Collaboration with Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh will support ambition to create internationally recognised arboretum on Skye



*Woodland gardens at Armadale Castle*



*Part of Armadale Castle's Victorian Arboretum*

Armadale Castle Gardens is set to play an important role in endangered species conservation, it was announced today. Through a new collaboration with the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE), Armadale's historic gardens will be linked with the prestigious International Conifer Conservation Programme as a satellite garden for threatened plant material. The south Skye gardens will become part of a network of 'safe sites' where endangered tree species are able to flourish.

Conifers are of major importance worldwide and over 34% of all conifer species are threatened. This 'living collection' of endangered species will contribute to the ICCP's vital research about endangered species, and potentially be used for conifer restoration programmes.

Armadale Castle is set to receive over one hundred young conifers this year, all of which are under threat of extinction. The trees are grown in Edinburgh from seeds collected in the wild under strictly controlled licence arrangements. Some of the trees will be planted this autumn and next spring, while others will be grown on in Armadale's nursery for future planting.

Many of the plants originate from material collected in Chile. Among them are *Fitzroya cupressoides*, a large and long lived cypress-like conifer, and *Saxegothaea conspicua*, 'Prince Albert's yew', an attractive conifer from Chile's forests. Others include *Abies firma*, 'Japanese fir'; *Abies pinsapo* var. *marocana*, 'Spanish fir'; and *Pinus koraiensis*, 'Korean pine'.

Prior to joining the programme, Armadale Castle hosted a visit from the RBGE's conifer expert Martin Gardner MBE, who is Coordinator of the International Conifer Conservation Programme and former Chair of the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) Conifer Specialist Group. The visit enabled Martin to assess Armadale's suitability as a satellite garden and identify the range of material the gardens could support. This gave rise in an invitation to select from an extensive list of potential trees.

The new additions are set to complement the existing planting at Armadale's 40 acre woodland garden, which is widely recognised for its fine collection of trees. These include a number of specimens from the 1870s and earlier, as well as a number of more recently planted exotic species which thrive in the sheltered climate of south Skye.

Andrew Peters, Gardens Consultant at Armadale Castle, commented: "This new partnership is a major step on the way to us achieving our long term aim of creating an internationally recognised arboretum and woodland garden at Armadale, with conservation at its core. It enables us to build on our important existing collection and create a lasting legacy for future generations. At a time when the world's biodiversity faces unprecedented threats, we believe it is more important than ever to protect forests and threatened species and we are honoured to be part of this important programme."

Martin Gardner of RBGE and ICCP commented: "The International Conifer Conservation Programme is delighted to welcome Armadale Castle Gardens to its network of over 200 'safe

sites' for threatened conifers. The sheltered aspect of the Gardens makes it especially suitable for many of the conifers it will be growing as part of an international effort to help guard against the loss of these species in the wild." He added: "Andrew Peters and I have been colleagues for many years and I know that the team at Armadale will do an excellent job of both caring for these important specimens and engaging the public with the importance of conservation. We look forward to a long and fruitful collaboration."

The team at Armadale Castle are keen for the local community and wider public to become involved in the programme. Volunteers will be invited to join in the tree planting next year, and events and learning activities are also planned. There will also be opportunities to support the programme through sponsoring a tree or making a donation towards the costs of planting materials and cataloguing the collection.

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*Abies pinsapo* var. *marocana*



*Fitzroya cupressoides*

See overleaf for Notes to Editors and contact for photographs and interviews/

## **Notes to Editors**

**Armadale Castle, Gardens & Museum of the Isles** is a Visit Scotland 5 Star visitor attraction in Sleat, south Skye. The castle ruin, historic gardens and award-winning Museum sit at the heart of a 20,000 acre estate that was once part of the traditional lands of Clan Donald. The estate is now run by Clan Donald Lands Trust, a Scottish Registered Charity whose mission is to promote understanding and appreciation of the history and traditions of Clan Donald, the Lordship of the Isles and the Highlands & Islands.

Armadale Castle, Armadale, Sleat, Isle of Skye IV45 8RS

Web: [www.armadalecastle.com](http://www.armadalecastle.com)

Social: Facebook @ArmadaleCastleSkye, Instagram @ArmadaleCastleSkye, Twitter @ArmadaleCastle

Opening times: Normally open 9 months of the year; re-opening Spring 2021

**The International Conifer Conservation Programme** was established at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh in 1991. The programme uses taxonomic, conservation, genetic and horticultural research coupled with capacity building to promote conifer conservation globally. Since its founding the programme has worked in more than 50 countries around the world, focussing on Chile, New Caledonia, Lao PDR, Vietnam, China and other parts of Southeast Asia.

More information:

<https://threatenedconifers.rbge.org.uk/> and <https://www.rbge.org.uk/science-and-conservation/genetics-and-conservation/conifer-conservation/>

## **Press enquiries & images**

Images (approx 1 MB) can be downloaded from the following Flickr link:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/187017726@N05/albums>

Interviews and additional or high resolution images available on request; please contact:

**Christine Davis, Marketing Manager:** [marketing@armadalecastle.com](mailto:marketing@armadalecastle.com); tel. 01471 844305

For enquiries specifically about the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh or the International Conifer Conservation Programme please contact: Shauna Hay, Press & Marketing Manager, RBGE, [s.hay@rbge.org.uk](mailto:s.hay@rbge.org.uk); 0131 248 2900