

Royal Botanic Gardens
Kew

**Kew Science, Library and
Archive Collections
Development Policy**

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Purpose of the Document

Kew's Collections Development Policy provides an overarching statement of policy covering acquisition, disposal, use and supply of Kew's collections. The Policy provides our business rules by which the collections will be developed to support the aims and objectives of Kew's Science Strategy, Science Collections Strategy and the Library and Archives Strategy. The policy will be implemented through collection specific procedures. This document is based upon the [Collections Development Policy Template](#) issued by the Arts Council England as part of the Museum Accreditation Scheme, which provides an independent benchmark for best practice. Changes to the Template have been made to accommodate this. The policy does not cover collections held by Kew's Madagascar Conservation Centre whose collections are subject to Madagascan law. A future exercise will determine the extent to which the principals set out here can be applied to these collections. The development of the living collection growing in the garden is also not covered by this policy, but Science and Horticulture are working together to ensure standards are shared wherever possible and appropriate. The collection management principles covered within this document inform best practice within the Science Directorate, irrespective of whether the collection is covered by spectrum standards or not, and endeavour to align with other relevant standards such as BS 4971:2017 (Conservation and care of archive and library collections) and BS EN 16893:2018 Conservation of Cultural Heritage though these areas may be supported in more detail by specific collection care policies. This Collection Development Policy also supports obligations of particular significance to natural science collections such as access to genetic resources and benefit sharing under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) particularly the Nagoya Protocol and relevant national law of provider countries and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

Collections not covered by this policy:

Living Collections in the Gardens

Collections held by Kew's Madagascar Conservation Centre

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1.0 Relationship to other relevant policies/plans of the organisation

1.1 Kew's mission and statement:

Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (Kew), is a Non-Departmental Public Body with exempt charitable status. The governing body is The Board of Trustees, established under the [National Heritage Act 1983](#) and came into existence on 8 August 1983.

Kew's mission is: *"to understand and protect plants and fungi for the well-being of people and the future of all life on Earth"*. [Kew's Corporate Strategy 2021-2030](#) [Our Manifesto for Change](#), recognises that Kew's collections are unique and lie at the heart of Kew's future success and stresses the need to digitise the collections to broaden their use in science, conservation and humanities research.

[Kew's Science Strategy 2021-2025](#) articulates Kew's scientific priorities.

The Science Strategy notes: "Underpinning all five Priorities, our living and preserved collections will be further developed to increase the diversity of reference material and data. Our collections are essential for supporting hypothesis-driven research, and our collecting activities will be guided by an analysis of gaps in geographic and taxonomic coverage and their relevance to our Priorities."

The strategic development of the collections are guided by the [Science Collections Strategy](#) and the Library and Archives Strategy [in development due 2023].

The extensive living collections in the gardens held by Kew are out of scope of this Collections Development Policy, though it is an aim of the three Kew Collections strategies (Living Collections, Science Collections, and Library and Archives) to mutually support each other and develop synergies to support Kew's mission.

- 1.2 The governing body will ensure that both acquisition and disposal are carried out openly and with transparency.
- 1.3 Kew has a long-term purpose and holds collections in trust for the benefit of the public in relation to its stated objectives. The governing body therefore accepts the principle that sound curatorial reasons must be established before consideration is given to any acquisition to the collection, or the disposal of any items in Kew's collection.
- 1.4 Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in exceptional circumstances.
- 1.5 Kew will undertake due diligence and make every effort not to acquire, whether by purchase, gift, bequest or exchange, any object or specimen unless the governing body or its delegates are satisfied that Kew can acquire a valid title to the item in question.
- 1.6 In accordance with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Kew has developed its [Policy on Access to Genetic Resources and Benefit-Sharing](#). This aims to ensure that all material brought into Kew has been legally acquired, is used and supplied on terms and conditions consistent with those under which it was acquired, and that benefits arising from the use of genetic resources are shared fairly and equitably. Kew seeks to collaborate and share information with colleagues in the non-commercial research community to build a harmonised sectoral approach to Access and Benefit Sharing (for instance [The Principles on Access to Genetic Resources and Benefit Sharing](#), [Principles on ABS](#) and the [Consortium of European Taxonomic Facilities \(CETAF\) Code of Conduct and Best Practice for Access and Benefit-Sharing](#)).
- 1.7 Kew's collections form a fundamental component of the site's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) as a World Heritage Site. Any significant changes in the management or housing of the collections may therefore impact the significance, integrity and authenticity of the World Heritage Site and will require a Heritage Impact Assessment and consultation with Historic England and DCMS as the UK 'State Party' to the World Heritage Convention.
- 1.8 In accordance with Section 4(1) of the Public Records Act 1958, Kew has been formally appointed as a Place of Deposit. This designation authorises Kew to retain within its archives the public records it creates that have been selected for permanent preservation. As a Place of Deposit, Kew is also expected to accept ongoing accruals of these records in line with its archival responsibilities.
- 1.9 Kew will not undertake disposal motivated principally by financial reasons.

2.0 History of the collections

2.1 Science Collections

Kew's Science Collections date back to 1847, although the oldest individual specimens include ancient Egyptian plant wreaths from 2000 BC and a small number of Indian herbarium specimens from 1696. They originated principally through the amalgamation of several private collections, including the herbaria of Sir William Hooker and George Bentham and M. J. Berkeley's mycological collection.

Today, Kew houses some of the largest and most diverse botanical and mycological collections in the world, and they continue to grow by approximately 25,000 new specimens a year – from herbarium sheets to microscope slides, artefacts, seeds, leaf tissue, material stored in alcohol and DNA. Around 30% of these are collected in the field by Kew scientists, through active projects with our partners around the world. The remainder are sent to Kew by other institutions and occasionally individuals in areas relevant to our research programmes.

Kew's collections focus on vascular plants (ferns, lycopods, gymnosperms and flowering plants) and fungi (including lichens and fungal analogues such as oomycetes). Bryophytes and algae, held at Kew until the 1960s, are now housed at the Natural History Museum London, other than a small number of bryophytes that were collected to support specific science projects.

Specimens held at Kew prior to the death of Sir Joseph Banks in 1820 were then transferred to the Natural History Museum (then the British Museum), due to Kew undergoing a period of decline. As a result of this there are very few specimens at Kew dating from before 1820 and those which exist are largely later acquisitions. These exceptions include the small but historically important collections of UK plants in the Joseph Lightfoot and William Borrer Herbaria which were later donations from Kew Palace.

The geographical scope of the collections is global, and they contain specimens from all continents. In some focal regions, the collections are extensive in both taxonomic breadth and depth and these collection 'hotspots' reflect Kew's historical scientific interests. From the 1960s, for example, Kew concentrated its research and conservation programs in the tropical areas of Africa, Asia and South America, where much of the world's plant diversity is concentrated. A UK and UK Overseas Territory focus was also maintained for plant and fungal specimens related to conservation work.

Prior to the 1960s, collections tended to be focused in areas once part of the British Empire – for example, eastern and southern Africa, Australia, southern Asia, and areas important to British trade in the New World, such as Brazil. The collections were also enhanced with duplicates from prolific collectors. More recent collections at Kew have continued to focus on key areas of the world and model taxonomic groups in which we have historical collections and particular expertise, including *Arecaceae* (palms), *Fabaceae* (legumes), *Orchidaceae* (orchids) and *Poaceae* (grasses). However, there has also been a complementary focus on collections of species that share particular traits of interest and those that represent themed groups of taxa, such as ectomycorrhizal fungi and crop wild relatives; these collections lie across geographic regions and lineages.

Historical collecting strategies have similarly influenced other collections at institutions the world over. Given limited resources for collections, it is imperative that in the future the global coverage of different institutes is properly recognised, and that collections and collection hotspots complement rather than compete. One aim of the Accelerated Taxonomy priority in Kew's Science Strategy 2021-2025 is to conduct a global gap analysis of herbarium collections to inform future collecting efforts. It is envisaged that the trend towards digitisation of collection data and increased accessibility will greatly improve knowledge of the global coverage of collections and flag up critical collection gaps.

2.2 Library and Archives

The Library and Archives of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew were established 170 years ago and contain one of the largest collections of material in the world relating to botany. Until 1852 there was no formal Library, although from 1846 the Treasury allowed an annual grant of £10 towards the purchase of books for students. Before that time, key figures, including Kew's first official Director, Sir William Hooker (appointed 1840), made their own libraries available for use.

In 1852 the Rev William A Bromfield bequeathed his well-chosen library of about 600 volumes to begin the collection which exists today; this was augmented in 1854 by the botanist George Bentham's library of 1,200 standard texts and in 1866 by the purchase of Sir William Hooker's library of around 600 volumes and correspondence for £1,000.

George Bentham's generosity extended to a bequest in his will which provided funds to set up a Trust. The Bentham Trust was used to acquire further key acquisitions to augment the library's holdings. (The Trust was later added to by the Moxon siblings and was re-named the Bentham Moxon Trust.)

Kew's Archives, dating back to the 18th century, contain over 7 million documents that offer a rich resource for botanical research. They include official records created by Kew and personal papers from key figures in botany. Highlights include correspondence collections, volumes relating to Kew's interactions around colonial economic botany, global plant exchange records, historic maps, and field notebooks. Personal collections feature figures like William and Joseph Hooker, Charles Darwin, Marianne North and other notable botanists and artists. The archives also document indigenous knowledge supporting a more inclusive history of botanical exploration, and include a wide range of materials such as letters, journals, notebooks, and illustrations.

Kew's Illustrations and Artefact Collections are a world-renowned resource for botanical illustration, forming an exceptional visual record for species of plants and fungi. They comprise of over 200,000 prints and drawings, assembled over the last 200 years and ranging in date from the 18th century to the present day, and around 300 artefacts ranging from botanical medals, scientific equipment, furniture, to a travelling chair used by the 18th century naturalist Sir Joseph Banks. Additional works on paper, portraits, photographs, and three-dimensional objects chart the history of botany and the enduring role played by Kew. The Illustrations Collection is a working resource, accessible and available for use by Kew staff and visiting researchers as a reference tool alongside the preserved herbarium specimens. It is arranged systematically by plant family in the same way as the Herbarium Collection. The two collections are analogous and type illustrations occasionally act as the original source for the name and description of a plant species in the absence of a type specimen. As well as documenting the visual characteristics of plants and fungi, the illustrations have historical value in terms of provenance, context and in relation to specific plant hunters. The collection has a global reach; recording plants from around the world with the authorship of a wide range of nationalities.

There are a number of a "special collections" that sit within Library and Archives. These are ordered by artist and origin and include work by the great 18th century masters of botanical illustration such as Georg Dionysius Ehret and Franz and Ferdinand Bauer, through to Walter Hood Fitch in the 19th century, and the work of contemporary illustrators contributing to publications such as Curtis's Botanical Magazine and Kew Bulletin. Works range in media and dimension from pocket sized sketchbooks to large format pieces such as those found in the Edouard Morren Collection of bromeliad paintings (measuring up to three metres in width). In addition, the collection contains a large number of portraits of eminent scientists, botanical artists and explorers, spanning several centuries to the current day, and a collection of photographs which record plants, their uses, and the history of Kew.

3.0 An overview of current collections

See [Kew Science Collection Strategy](#) pages 10-23.
[and Kew Library and Archives Strategy in development]

3.1 Science Collections

Kew houses one of the largest and most diverse botanical and mycological collections in the world, containing over 8.5 million items and representing approximately 95% of the world's vascular plant genera and 60% of fungal genera. The strength of Kew's collections lies not only in their extraordinary breadth and depth but also in the unique suite of collections, the synergy between them and the high quality of curation. These collections are a unique and dynamic resource of vascular plants and fungi from across the globe, and they provide an exceptional evidence base for addressing some of the critical challenges facing humanity – from climate change to food security and human health. The Kew Science Digitisation programme, running from 2022 to 2026 will fully catalogue and image the Herbarium collection and catalogue and image labels of the Fungarium collection; manage all catalogued records from all the Science Collections outlined in the table below in a new integrated collection management system based on [Earthcape](#), and provide an open access portal based on the [Atlas of Living Australia](#) platform.

The collections are summarized below:

Collection	Approximate size *	Description
Herbarium	7,000,000	Preserved dried vascular plant specimens ¹ . The number of species represented is unknown, but the current herbarium catalogue, which covers 12% of the collection, represents 187,500 species.
Spirit Collection	76,000	Specimens ¹ of plants, plant parts and fungi preserved in spirit, representing almost 30,000 species.

Fungarium	1,250,000	Preserved dried fungi, lichens and fungal analogues such as oomycetes and myxomycetes. An additional 1,100 fungal cultures are stored in liquid nitrogen. The number of species represented is unknown, but the current Fungarium catalogue, which covers 40% of the collection, contains 52,000 species.
Economic Botany Collection	100,000	A broad range of specimens ¹ and objects documenting the use of plants by people, including 42,000 wood collections. Approximately 20,000 species are represented.
Seed Collection	98,000	Seed collections ³ held in the Millennium Seed Bank, with almost 2.5 billion individual seeds representing around 40,000 species. An additional 20,000 preserved seed samples from herbarium sheets are held for taxonomic reference.
DNA and Tissue Bank	65,000	48,000 samples ² of plant genomic DNA stored at -80 °C, and 17,000 silica-dried tissue samples at room temperature – together representing around 35,000 species.
Microscope Slide Collection	150,000	Microscope slides documenting plant and fungal anatomy, including c. 40,000 slides of pollen, c. 36,000 slides of wood and c. 10,500 slides of fungi. An estimated 76,000 species are represented.
<i>In Vitro</i> Collection	6,000	Plant and fungi cultured on agar. Comprises 1,000 <i>in vitro</i> plants of over 20 species of orchids, and 5,000 cultures of mycorrhizal and non-mycorrhizal fungi corresponding to 600 genetically distinct isolates covering c. 200 identified species.

* The exact size of the larger collections and the precise number of species contained within them is unknown, and the sizes given for these therefore represent an estimate based on our knowledge of the collection and those specimens that have been digitised.

¹A specimen = material collected from a single plant or fungal species at a given location and a given time

²A sample = tissue or DNA collected/extracted from a single plant at a given time

³A collection = a group of related specimens. In the case of seed collections these represent seeds gathered from the same individual or same population at the same time

We aim to provide open access to these collections to support all relevant aspects of research and outreach. These collections and related laboratories are visited by around 775 scientific researchers from around the world spending almost 8000 days at Kew each year. Over 950 publications cited Kew data based on downloads from the Global Biodiversity Information Facility from 2020 onwards (other collection data will be made available to GBIF over the coming 2 years and a new Kew Portal is under development).

The standard terms under which Kew acquires, uses and supplies material are outlined [here](#) with further details on use of material [here](#).

3.2 Library and Archives

Today Library and Archives, with illustrations and artefacts managed within it, exists to support all aspects of the work of the institution and to serve staff and students at all our sites. It also serves visiting scholars and researchers from all over the world: over 90 languages are represented in the collections. These collections are held in the Main Library at Kew and 4 branch libraries at Kew and Wakehurst and comprise:

Material Type	Approximated size*
Monographs	180,000
Periodical titles (in print and electronically)	5,000
Pamphlets and reprints	150,000
Sheet maps (including those of many historic expeditions)	25,00
Microforms including all available herbaria (including all available herbaria)	11,000
Prints and drawings (chiefly watercolour botanical illustration)	200,000
Archival material comprising personal papers, diaries, collecting notebooks and correspondence	7,000,000
Artefacts	300

* The exact size of the larger collections and the precise number of species contained within them is unknown, and the sizes given for these therefore represent an estimate based on our knowledge of the collection and those specimens that have been digitised.

Materials are acquired from all over the world by gift, exchange, purchase, and through Kew's record management programme; the aim is to be as comprehensive as possible. Long-established links exist with colleagues in other institutions world-wide, leading to close cooperation and knowledge-sharing. Kew's corporate records are appraised and selected for permanent preservation in the archives in accordance with the records management policy.

The Library Catalogue is accessible via this: [Kew Library Catalogue](#)

The Archive catalogue is accessible via this link: [Kew Archive Catalogue](#)

3.3 Kew's collections are owned by the Board of Trustees under the National Heritage Act 1983, except in the following circumstances:

- Material is owned by the country of origin following national laws on access to genetic resources and benefit sharing.
- Material rehomed by law enforcement agencies, usually as a result of seizures contravening CITES, in which case the material is owned by the Crown.
- Public records which Kew holds within the archives as a Place of Deposit under Section 4 (1) the Public Records Act (1958)
- CABI (Centre for Agriculture and Biosciences International) retain ownership of the CABI mycological collection (also known as the Imperial Mycological Institution (IMI) collection) due to CABI's responsibilities and agreements with CABI partners and other third parties. However, in the agreement with Kew CABI expressly permits RBG Kew to deal with the collection as if it belonged to Kew, except that Kew may not destroy or transfer ownership of any part of the collection without CABI consent and that the collection must be treated to the same standards and procedures as Kew's own collections.

In the above cases terms and conditions surrounding Kew's acquisition of the material must be adhered to.

4.0 Themes and priorities for future collecting

4.1 Priorities for the Science Collections

The overarching priority for Kew's collections managed by the Science Directorate is to support [Kew's Science Strategy](#) Priorities, as such:

- **Ecosystem Stewardship:** Conducting innovative research into evidence-led protection of biodiversity and ecosystem services, while seeking nature-based solutions to societal challenges.
- **Trait Diversity and Function:** Understanding plant and fungal traits, to aid conservation, increase resilience to global change, and explore potential uses and benefits for human health and well-being
- **Digital Revolution:** The large-scale digitisation of specimens and integration of data systems to increase the global value and use of RBG Kew's collections for science, conservation and education
- **Accelerated Taxonomy:** Using new technologies to push the frontiers of taxonomic research, accelerating the characterisation and identification of species.
- **Enhanced Partnerships:** Cultivating current and new scientific, educational and commercial partnerships within the UK and across the world to maximise scientific excellence and on-the-ground impact.

To help focus Kew's resources and direct scientific activity to where the most positive impact can be made, Kew will seek to prioritise developing collections based on material collecting from strategic countries. These are as follows:

- **Key strategic countries:** Brazil, Colombia, Ethiopia, Guinea, Indonesia, Madagascar, Mexico, South Africa, Thailand, UK.
- **Strategic countries:** Bolivia, Cameroon, Kenya, Malawi, Malaysia, Mozambique, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, UKOTs British Virgin Islands, UKOTs South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands, UKOTs St Helena, Ascension and Tristan de Cunha.
- **Enabling countries:** Australia, China, Germany, India, Spain, USA

Kew will acquire new material which falls within the broad aims of the Science Strategy and the National Heritage Act, provided the material fits within the established scope of an individual collection profile. In order to fulfil these priorities we will seek to increase diversity of voices and perspectives that is represented within the collections, in line with Kew's History, Equity and Inclusion Plan. These individual collections priorities are as follows:

4.1.1 The Herbarium

- Herbarium material collected to provide global representation of Angiosperms, Gymnosperms, Pteridophytes and Lycophytes.
- Sterile material will only be accepted as part of in-depth studies (closely aligned to the science strategy).
- UK and European material will not normally be accepted unless in support of a Kew Science project.

4.1.2 Spirit Collection

- Material and genomic samples derived from material at Kew or other collections to support research
- Population samples of taxa or particular interest to research programmes.

4.1.3 The Fungarium

- Families of particular research priority including: *Teloschistaceae* and *Cortinariaceae*.
- Groups and countries that are underrepresented within the current collection.

4.1.4 The Economic Botany Collection

- Material that documents the human use of a plant or fungi, such as food, clothing, medicine, art, music.
- Material that is taxonomically identifiable.
- Documents the history of Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and Wakehurst Place.
- Collected by an important figure within the world of botany, ethnography and related fields.
- Building longitudinal series of material types already well represented in the collection, e.g. baskets, medicinal plants used in Europe, fibres, dyes, paper, and rubber.
- Selective gap-filling by species for near-comprehensive collections such as timber.
- Well-documented collections that are the outcome of research careers, research projects, or institutional collecting activities, that add major depth to the EBC in their topic.

4.1.5 Seed Collection

- Seeds deemed to be useful - from crop wild relatives and medicinal uses to nature-based solutions.
- Seeds of threatened or rare species of plants.
- Seeds of evolutionarily distinct taxa.
- Filling gaps in sampling of genetic, geographic, environmental, and functional diversity of taxa.
- In order to support restoration needs.

4.1.6 DNA and Tissue Bank

- Endemic or endangered species.
- Samples from the Living Collection.

4.1.7 Microscope Slide Collection

- Slides that build upon taxonomic areas of strength, for example legumes and monocots, as well as filling important gaps in current collections.
- Slides that are related to wood anatomy, in particular World Forestry ID.
- Slides that target potential areas of future research, such as environmental change, e.g. water plants and succulents.
- Slides that contain CITES-listed taxa and their lookalikes.

4.1.8 In Vitro Collection

- Material which directly supports Kew's conservation projects.

4.2 Priorities for Library and Archives Collections

The Library and Archives at Kew forms part of the U.K.'s national reference collections under the terms of the National Heritage Act 1983. The Act mandates Kew to acquire botanical material and make it available and accessible to the public. We do this by trying to collect as widely as possible (with areas of focus guided by Kew's Science Strategy and the [Manifesto for Change](#)) and through the provision of the public Reading Room and enquiry service. The wording of the Act states that we must "care for [Kew's] collections..., keep the collections as national reference collections, secure that they are available ... for the purposes of study, add to and adapt them as scientific needs and the Board's resources allow, and afford to members of the public opportunities for the purpose of gaining knowledge and enjoyment from [Kew's] collections." Kew Library and Archives is the de facto U.K. national botanical library. Kew's Library and Archive is a Place of Deposit under the Public Record Act (1958).

Royal Botanical Garden, Kew's corporate records are deemed public records, and their management is guided by legislation relating to public records, freedom of information and data protection. We will also do all we can to open up Kew to expand our reach and the communities we serve. Library and Archives' resources and activities are designed to address the information needs of our users.

4.2.1 Support collections (based on areas of focus for current research)

- Resources on regions with high or unique plant and fungal diversity (such as Key Strategic or TIPA Countries) or which have plants that are under threat/endangered/economically important
- Resources relevant to trait-based research (exploring the properties of species as sources of food, fibre, medicine, building material, energy, carbon storage among others)
- Resources on growing these plants and plant morphology
- Countries for which there is very little existing information or which are not the focus of major research activity by other institutions
- Resources on taxa helping Kew to address important research questions relating to global plant and fungal diversity and distribution (such as the Plant & Fungal Trees of Life)
- Resources documenting ecosystem services, adaptations to climate change
- Access to periodicals, emulating as far as possible a university experience in the fields of plant and fungal science, ecology, evolution, geography and related fields.
- Resources relating to historical Kew and Wakehurst landscapes
- Material under Kew's remit as the national botanical library, under the terms of the National Heritage Act 1983.

4.2.2 Rare books, Archives, Illustrations and Artefacts

- Material of botanical or taxonomic importance.
- Material that Increases diversity of voices and perspectives that is represented within the collections.
- Strengthening areas of the collections that have little or no representation.
- Significance for the history of the scientific discipline of taxonomy or botany in general.
- Significance for the history or development of the artistic discipline of Botanical Illustration.
- Significance for the history of Kew and Wakehurst.
- Potential for public exhibition or education.

5.0 Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal

- 5.1 Kew recognises that the principles on which priorities for rationalisation and disposal are determined will be through a formal review process that identifies which collections are included and excluded from the review. The outcome of review and any subsequent rationalisation will not reduce the quality or significance of the collection and will result in a more useable, well managed collection.
- 5.2 The procedures used will meet professional standards. The process will be documented, open and transparent. There will be clear communication with key stakeholders about the outcomes and the process.
- 5.3 Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal will be considered for legal, safety or care and conservation reasons (for example, spoliation, infestation, repatriation). This may include seed in the seedbank which do not germinate or duplicate herbarium specimens being sent to the country of origin. Disposal from Library and Archives collections is very rare and would only be considered in cases where items accepted historically no longer fit in with collecting policies.
- 5.4 Kew will confirm that it is legally free to dispose of an item: agreements on disposal made with donors will be taken into account, as will agreements made with provider countries relating to items covered by the Convention on Biological Diversity and related legislation.
- 5.5 Following Kew Science Collection Strategy there are no priorities for disposal over the time frame of this Policy. However, this Strategy states that options for long term storage of fungal cultures will consider both in house and outsourcing to a third party. Disposal of Kew's small myxomycete collection to an alternative institution where it can be used more will be considered, if the resources needed to relocate it do not impact negatively on the remaining collections and if an interested institution can be found.

6.0 Legal and ethical framework for acquisition and disposal of items

- 6.1 Kew recognises its responsibility to work within the parameters of the [Museum Association Code of Ethics](#) when considering acquisition and disposal.
- 6.2 As specified in the [National Heritage Act 1983, section 27](#) the Board may dispose of an object or specimen in the following scenarios:
- 6.2.1 The disposal is by way of sale, exchange or gift of an object which is a duplicate of another object the property in which is so vested and which is so comprised.
- 6.2.2 The disposal is by way of sale, exchange or gift of an object which in the Board's opinion is unsuitable for retention in their collections and can be disposed of without detriment to the interests of students or other members of the public.
- The disposal (by whatever means, including destruction) is of an object which the Board are satisfied has become useless for the purposes of their collections by reason of damage, physical deterioration, or infestation by destructive organisms.
- 6.3 Further detail on the disposal of material forming part of the collections is addressed in the Deaccession and Disposal Policy, which details how Kew can dispose of material regarding Section 27 of the 1983 National Heritage Act and the level of authority required for approval.
- 6.4 Kew intends to honour the letter and spirit of the [Convention on Biological Diversity \(CBD\)](#) including the [Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and Benefit Sharing](#), the [Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora \(CITES\)](#), [International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture](#), and national laws relating to access and benefit-sharing, including those relating to traditional knowledge. Kew recognises the sovereign rights of States over their own biological resources and that the authority to determine access to genetic resources rests with national governments and is subject to national legislation.
- 6.5 Kew will acquire collections by undertaking field work with partners in countries of origin. It also receives materials through donation or exchange with other botanical institutions and individuals. Kew is committed to ensuring that all material accessioned by Kew has been legally acquired, with the prior informed consent of the country of origin (see [Policy on Access to Genetic Resources and Benefit-Sharing](#)).
- 6.6 Kew will exercise due diligence and make every effort not to acquire, whether by purchase, gift, bequest or exchange, any object or specimen unless the responsible officer (, following Kew's Governance Framework) is satisfied that Kew can acquire a valid title to the item in question. If the valid title is in doubt, material will be returned to the donor or offered to the relevant national institution in the providing country. In the scenario where genetic resources are transferred to Kew on terms under which the providing country retains ownership to those resources, these conditions will be tracked and entered into the collection management system with adequate reference to the terms and conditions terms governing its use.
- 6.7 Kew will comply with the terms and conditions of written agreements such as material transfer agreements or material supply agreements which specify the terms and conditions of use of material held by Kew.
- 6.8 The Head of Science Collections holds a licence to possess Kew's scheduled drug collections. Acquisition, disposal and storage must follow [Misuse of Drugs Regulations 1985](#) (revised 2001) and guidance from the Drugs and Firearm Licencing Unit of the Home Office. Current procedures are outlined in Kew's Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the storage, use and disposal of Controlled Drugs which is revised annually. Kew currently does not have a licence to supply controlled drugs.
- 6.9 Material covered by UK Government Plant Health Regulations will be handled according to the terms of Kew's Plant Health Licences issued by DEFRA and standard operating procedures followed. Separate conditions pertain to seed (managed by the Seed Collection Manager), living plants (managed by the Plant Health officer), and dried non-pathogenic fungi or fungal cultures (Head of Science Collections). Projects dealing with pathogenic fungi will require specific licences managed by the relevant Principal Investigator of specific projects.
- 6.10 In accordance with the provisions of the UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, which the UK ratified with effect from November 1, 2002, and the Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act 2003, Kew will reject any items that have been illicitly traded.

The Trustees and its delegates will be guided by the [national guidance on the responsible acquisition of cultural property](#) issued by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in 2005.

7.0 Collecting policies of other museums

- 7.1 Kew will take account of the collecting policies of other museums and other organisations collecting in the same or related areas or subject fields. It will consult with these organisations where conflicts of interest may arise or to define areas of specialism, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.
- 7.2 Specific reference is made to the following museum(s)/organisation(s):
- Institutions in the country from where collections are derived
 - Institutions collaborating on particular projects
 - Collections worldwide with relevant regional or taxonomic strengths including:
 - The Natural History Museum, London
 - Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh Herbarium
 - Naturalis, Netherlands
 - Museum National D'Histoire Naturelle, Paris
 - Parc Botanique et Zoologique de Tsimbazaza, Madagascar
 - New York Herbarium
 - Missouri Herbarium
 - The Horniman Museum, London
 - British Museum, London
 - Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford

8.0 Acquisition

- 8.1 Kew recognises its responsibility, when acquiring additions to its collections, to ensure that care of collections, documentation arrangements and use of collections will meet the correct standards. This includes using [Spectrum 5.1](#) primary procedures for collections management wherever appropriate; the standards developed through participation in the Global Genome Biodiversity Network (GGBN) DNA and Tissue Bank collections, the Millennium Seed Bank Partnership Seed Conservation Standards, and BS 4971:2017 - Conservation and care of archive and library collections (for Library and Archives collections).
- 8.2 Prior to any acquisition Kew will take into account the themes and priorities outlined in Section 4, and the legal and ethical framework outlined in Section 6. Kew will also consider any limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as staffing, storage, care of collection arrangements, and obligations resulting from relevant material transfer agreements or access and benefit sharing agreements with countries of origin.
- 8.3 Kew will not acquire any object or specimen unless it is satisfied that the object or specimen has not been acquired in, or exported from, its country of origin (or any intermediate country in which it may have been legally owned) in violation of that country's laws. (For the purposes of this paragraph 'country of origin' includes the United Kingdom).
- 8.4 In accordance with the provisions of the [UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property](#), which the UK ratified with effect from November 1 2002, and [the Dealing in Cultural Objects \(Offences\) Act 2003](#), Kew will reject any items that have been illicitly traded. The governing body will be guided by the national guidance on the [responsible acquisition of cultural property](#) issued by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in 2005.
- 8.5 Material which has restrictions which do not allow Kew to use the collections in furtherance of its work, or under terms which cannot be implemented will not be acquired, and in such cases will be returned to the provider.
- 8.6 Acquisitions outside the current stated policy, refer to Section 4.0, will only be made in very exceptional circumstances.
- 8.7 Kew will not accept an item if the acquisition is primarily for the purposes of commercial endorsement.

9.0 Human remains

Kew does not hold or intend to acquire any human remains. If human remains are found in uncatalogued collections they will be disposed of, if they are not covered by exemptions human tissue licensing regulations (e.g taken for diagnostic purposes). Any research involving human tissue collection requires the Principal Investigator to gain approval from a recognised Research Ethics Committee and apply for a licence from the Human Tissue Authority. This is particularly relevant to our fungi and microscope slide collections.

10.0 Biological and genetic material

- 10.1 So far as biological material is concerned, Kew will not acquire by any direct or indirect means any specimen that has been collected, sold or otherwise transferred in contravention of any national or international wildlife protection or natural history conservation law or treaty of the United Kingdom or any other country, except with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority.
- 10.2 Kew will not accept genetic resources from organisations and individuals if we are not satisfied that they are acting in good faith and have acquired the material according to national laws on access to genetic resources and any relevant material transfer agreements (See Section 6) and in line with CITES.
- 10.3 As a research institution it is important that Kew is able to exchange and supply material to similar institutions for the purpose of enabling scientific research and education, as well as to meet the objectives outlined in Kew's [Manifesto for Change](#). To help to meet these objectives, emphasis is placed on providing access to collections to support and build capacity for taxonomy, conservation biology and sustainable use of biological resources.
- 10.4 Kew will supply biological/genetic material in its collections on terms that are consistent with those under which they were acquired. Material supplied to third parties will be for the purposes of scientific research, under a standard Material Supply Agreement (MSA) which prohibits commercialisation. Any commercialisation to which Kew agrees will be subject to a separate written agreement setting out fair and equitable sharing of benefits with the country of origin of the material.
- 10.5 Kew is committed to sharing the benefits from the use of material fairly and equitably with the country of origin of the material and relevant stakeholders. Kew has long-term partnerships with many different institutions and countries and works with these collaborators to develop appropriate benefit-sharing arrangements.

11.0 Archaeological material

Kew will not acquire archaeological material in any case where the governing body or responsible officer has any suspicion that the circumstances of their recovery involved a failure to follow the appropriate legal procedures.

12.0 Exceptions

Any exceptions to the above clauses will only be because Kew is:

- Acting as an externally approved repository of last resort for material of local (UK) origin.
- Acting with the permission of authorities with the requisite jurisdiction in the country of origin.

In these cases, Kew will be open and transparent in the way we make decisions and will act only with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority. We will document when these exceptions occur.

13.0 Spoliation

Kew will use '[Spoliation of Works of Art during the Holocaust and World War II period: Statement of Principles and Proposed Actions](#)', issued by the National Museum Directors' Conference in 1998, and report on them in accordance with the guidelines.

14.0 Disposal procedures

- 14.1 All disposals will be undertaken with reference to the [Spectrum 5.1](#) primary procedures on disposal.
- 14.2 The governing body or its delegates will confirm that it is legally free to dispose of an item. Agreements on disposal made with donors will also be taken into account. Further details regarding delegation of authority can be found in the Deaccession and Disposal Policy.
- 14.3 When a disposal of an object or specimen is being considered, Kew will establish if it was acquired with the aid of an external funding organisation. In such cases, any conditions attached to the original grant will be followed. This may include repayment of the original grant and a proportion of the proceeds if the item is disposed of by sale.
- 14.4 When disposal is motivated by curatorial reasons the procedures outlined below will be followed and the method of disposal may be by gift, sale, exchange or as destruction.
- 14.5 The decision to dispose of material from the collections will be taken by the governing body or its delegates only after full consideration of the reasons for disposal. Other factors including public benefit, the implications for Kew's collections and collections held by museums and other organisations collecting the same material or in related fields will be considered. Expert advice will be obtained and the views of stakeholders such as donors, researchers, local and source communities and others served by Kew will also be sought.
- 14.6 A decision to dispose of a specimen or object, whether by gift, exchange, sale or destruction (in the case of an item too badly damaged or deteriorated to be of any use for the purposes of the collections or for reasons of health and safety), will be the responsibility of the governing body of Kew acting on the advice of professional curatorial staff, if any, and not of the curator or manager of the collection acting alone.
- 14.7 Kew receives solicited and unsolicited material from partner institutions from around the world. The accession process considers whether unsolicited material supports the development of the collection. Material which has little scientific value and does not support the development of the collection is not accessioned into the permanent collection. Such material will be either destroyed in a biosecure manner if it is of no scientific value or passed to another institution, where permission has been given to do so. Material of groups not studied by Kew will be passed to other institutions with known expertise and relevant collection strengths, when permission has been given to do so, as covered in Section 7.2.
- 14.8 Once a decision to dispose of material in the collection has been taken, priority will be given to retaining it within the public domain. In compliance with laws implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity the material will first be offered to National Institutions within the country of origin. If they are not willing to accept the material, for example if it is already a duplicate of material held in country, it will then be offered by gift or sale, directly to other Accredited Museums likely to be interested in its acquisition (See Sections 5.4, 6.4, 7.2, 8.5, 10.3 referring to obligations implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity).
- 14.9 If the material is not acquired by any Accredited Museum to which it was offered as a gift or for sale, then the museum community at large will be advised of the intention to dispose of the material normally through a notice on the Museum Associations' Find an Object web listing service, an announcement in the Museums Association's Museums Journal or in other specialist publications and websites (if appropriate).
- 14.10 The announcement relating to gift or sale will indicate the number and nature of specimens or objects involved, and the basis on which the material will be transferred to another institution. Preference will be given to expressions of interest from other Accredited Museums. A period of at least two months will be allowed for an interest in acquiring the material to be expressed. At the end of this period, if no expressions of interest have been received, Kew may consider disposing of the material to other interested individuals and organisations giving priority to organisations in the public domain.
- 14.11 Any monies received by Kew's governing body from the disposal of items will be applied solely and directly for the benefit of the collections. This normally means the purchase of further acquisitions. In exceptional cases, improvements relating to the care of collections in order to meet or exceed Accreditation requirements relating to the risk of damage to and deterioration of the collections may be justifiable. Any monies received in compensation for the damage, loss or destruction of items will be applied in the same way. Advice on those cases where the monies are intended to be used for the care of collections will be sought from the Arts Council England.
- 14.12 The proceeds of a sale will be allocated so it can be demonstrated that they are spent in a manner compatible with the requirements of the Accreditation standard. Money must be restricted to the long-term sustainability, use and development of the collection.

14.13 Full records will be kept of all decisions on disposals and the items involved and proper arrangements made for the preservation and/or transfer, as appropriate, of the documentation relating to the items concerned, including photographic records where practicable in accordance with [Spectrum 5.1](#) procedure on deaccession and disposal.

14.14 Disposal by exchange

The nature of disposal by exchange means that Kew will not necessarily be in a position to exchange the material with another Accredited Museum (see 7.2, 14.8). The governing body will therefore ensure that issues relating to accountability and impartiality are carefully considered to avoid undue influence on its decision-making process.

14.14.1 In cases where the governing body wishes for sound curatorial reasons to exchange material directly with Accredited or non-Accredited museums, with other organisations or with individuals, the procedures in paragraphs 15.1-5 will apply.

14.14.2 If the exchange is proposed to be made with a specific Accredited Museum, other Accredited museums which collect in the same or related areas will be directly notified of the proposal and their comments will be requested.

14.14.3 If the exchange is proposed with a non-Accredited Museum, with another type of organisation or with an individual, Kew will place a notice on the Museums Associations' Find an Object web listing service or make an announcement in the Museums Association's Museums Journal or in other specialist publications and websites (if appropriate).

14.14.4 Both the notification and announcement must provide information on the number and nature of the specimens or objects involved both in Kew's collection and those intended to be acquired in exchange. A period of at least two months must be allowed for comments to be received. At the end of this period, the governing body must consider the comments before a final decision on the exchange is made.

14.15 Disposal by destruction

If it is not possible to dispose of an object through transfer or sale, the governing body may decide to destroy it.

14.15.1 It is acceptable to destroy material of low intrinsic significance (duplicate mass-produced articles or common specimens which lack significant provenance) where no alternative method of disposal can be found.

14.15.2 Destruction is also an acceptable method of disposal in cases where an object is in extremely poor condition, has high associated health and safety risks or is part of an approved destructive testing request identified in an organisation's research policy.

14.15.3 Where necessary, specialist advice will be sought to establish the appropriate method of destruction. Health and safety risk assessments will be carried out by trained staff where required.

14.15.4 The destruction of objects will be witnessed by an appropriate member of Kew's workforce. In circumstances where this is not possible, eg the destruction of controlled substances, a police certificate should be obtained and kept in the relevant object history file.

14.16 Where duplicate collections are identified, Kew will dispose of them via the two methods stated above.

15.0 Policy Review procedure

The collections development policy will be published and reviewed at least once every five years. The date when the policy is next due for review is noted below.

Document Owner: Alan Paton (Head of Science Collections) and Ben Hill (Registrar and Accreditation Manager)

Name of governing body: Board of Trustees of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

Date of approval by governing body: 23/03/2023

Date at which this policy is due for review: 23/03/2028