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ROYAL COLLECTION TRUST

Back to its roots for palace gardens revamp

THEY have hosted jousting matches and tennis tournaments and were once home to a wild menagerie whose denizens included a lion, an ape and a camel.

Now the venerable gardens of the Palace of Holyroodhouse in Edinburgh are going back to their roots with the creation of a new public area inspired by a centuries-old design.

Architects have drawn up plans for a 2,500-metre green space, which will mirror a medicinal "physic" garden which could be found in the palace grounds in the 17th century.

Created to teach students about the beneficial properties of plants and to provide pharmacists with fresh materials, the garden was the first of its kind in Scotland and only the second botanic garden to be established in Britain.

The new version will have raised flowerbeds laid out in a geometric pattern, reflecting the original design, while year-round planting will include both native and exotic medicinal plants which would have been grown in the 17th century. Visitors can expect to see herbs such as Birthwort, said to assist with childbirth, the fever-reducing Feverfew, and Scurvy Grass – a remedy used by sailors after long voyages. A flowering meadow which echoes the 15th-century monastic garden of Holyrood Abbey, the palace's first recorded garden, will also be planted. Landscape architects J&L Gibbons will design the garden, under the direction of Future Programme's Lead Designers, Burd Haward Architects.

Research has also been undertaken by Royal Collection Trust and the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. Work is expected to begin this year, subject to planning permission, and the garden will open in the spring of 2019. The Palace Forecourt will also open to the public at the end of 2018.

Jonathan Marsden, director, Royal Collection Trust, said: "The return of scientific gardening to the place of its birth in Scotland will provide a new focus of interest for visitors to the palace, for the local community, and especially, we hope, for young people. It will be a further addition to the palace's spectacular setting within the natural landscape of Holyrood Park and Arthur's Seat beyond. It forms an important part of our plans to make more of the palace's surroundings and will provide a family friendly space just moments from the Royal Mile."

Simon Milne, regius keeper of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, added: "The very being of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh is linked to the Palace of Holyroodhouse and Scotland's first physic garden, created by the two doctors, Robert Sibbald and Andrew Balfour. As we prepare to celebrate our 350th anniversary in 2020, we are thrilled the Royal Collection Trust is creating a new physic garden at the palace, and we look forward to even greater collaboration and the opportunity for people to be inspired about the plants and their history."

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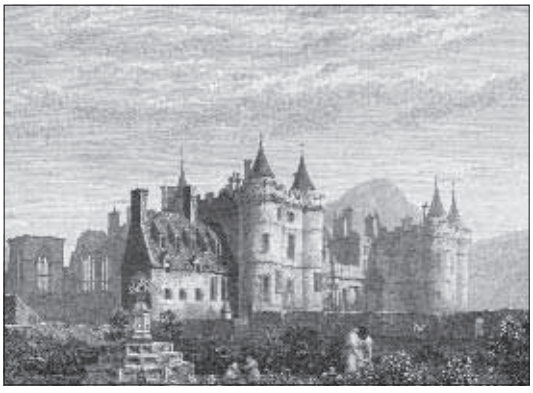
BLOOMING MARVELLOUS: An artist's impression of the new physic garden at the Palace of Holyroodhouse, which previously could be found in the grounds in the 17th century.



REGAL SETTING: A view of the palace gardens in 1835. Picture: Royal Collection Trust

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PICTURESQUE: The new flowering meadow evoking the palace's monastic garden.

BIRD'S EYE VIEW: A map of the palace and its gardens in 1647. Picture: National Library of Scotland

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