



Rhododendron vaseyi (Pinkshell azalea)



Franklinia alatamaha (Franklin tree)

The Historic role of American plants in British and Irish Gardens

Commemorating the 250th anniversary of American independence, this conference aims to highlight how North American plants have profoundly shaped our gardens, evolving from the exotic, treasured specimens brought back from the early colonies to the staples of modern prairie-style planting popularised by Piet Oudolf.

Pioneering expeditions in the 17th-century, such as those of Tradescant to Virginia, brought back the tulip tree, swamp cypress, phlox, asters and Virginia Creeper, while collectors in the following century, such as John Bartram and Peter Collinson, introduced maples, magnolias and rhododendrons among many others, fostering a trend for 'American gardens'.

The 19th-century exploration of the Pacific North-West coast by collectors such as David Douglas, Thomas Coulter and Thomas Hartweg, introduced many more new trees and shrubs all of which have made an enduring impact on our parks and gardens.

Conference will visit the J.F. Kennedy Arboretum, established in 1968, which has one of the most comprehensive and significant collections of woody plants in the world.



Liriodendron tulipifera (Tulip tree flower)

NORTHERN IRELAND HERITAGE GARDENS TRUST
www.nihgc.org

THE HISTORIC ROLE OF AMERICAN PLANTS IN IRISH AND BRITISH GARDENS

CONFERENCE

BRANDON HOUSE HOTEL

NEW ROSS

COUNTY WEXFORD

1st–3rd October 2026



THURSDAY 1st OCTOBER

6.00pm Registration and Reception
(Courtesy of the Office of Public Works)

7.30pm Welcome by the Chairman (NIHGT)
Conference opening by Mrs Lynn Walsh,
wife of His Excellency, the Ambassador of the
United States of America

Mark Laird
*'Theatrical shrubbery': New thoughts on
American plants* [online]

FRIDAY 2nd OCTOBER

9.15am Francesca Murray
*Tethered to Nobility in the Age of Discovery:
The American introductions of the
Tradescants*

10.00am Trevor Chilton
*Peter Collinson, founder and architect of the
American plant exchange in the eighteenth
century*

Tea/coffee break

11.30am John Edmondston
*Georg D. Ehret: pre-eminent botanical artist
of the mid 18th century*

12.15pm Darach Lupton
*A Living Legacy: The Story of the John F.
Kennedy Arboretum*

1.00pm Lunch

2.00pm Site Visit
Visit to the John F. Kennedy Arboretum led
by **Kevin Naughton**
Transport will be provided

7.30pm Dinner
Venue: Brandon House Hotel
Speaker: **Thomas Pakenham**
Plant hunters of the Pacific Coast

SATURDAY 3rd OCTOBER

9.30am Finola O'Kane
*Impact in Ireland of American plants in the
18th century*

Tea/coffee break

11.00am Mark Johnston
Forest Giants of the Pacific Coast

11.45am Syd House
*The impact of Douglas's tree introductions on
forestry and landscape in the British Isles*

Lunch

2.00pm Michael Lear
*The heritage and impact of North American
trees at Castlewellan National Arboretum*

2.45pm Iain Parkinson
*American plants at Wakehurst: From
botanical curiosity to climate resilience*

3.30pm Conference discussion



Picea sitchensis (Sitka spruce) at Curraghmore, Co. Waterford

BOOKING FORM

Conference fee:

Early Bird (before 31st August) – £259 €298
From 1st September – £279 €318
Fee includes coffee/tea, luncheon and dinner.

*(A reduced fee for students on an approved full time course
may be available – excludes dinner, please see website.)*

Information Required:

Name(s)

Address

Tel:

Email:

Please advise of special dietary needs if applicable

Payment:

Bank Transfer using payment details on the website.

www.nihgc.org

Please ensure that the required information is emailed to
secretary@nihgc.org stating the date of the bank transfer
and the name/reference you have used.

Cheques should be made payable to the 'Northern
Ireland Heritage Gardens Trust' and sent to NIHGT, c/o
11 Raffrey Road, Killinchy, Co. Down BT23 6SF

Queries – email **secretary@nihgc.org**

*Please note that no refunds will be given for cancellations
with 3 days of the conference. £70/€80 will be retained on
other cancellations*

Accommodation:

A finite number of rooms for delegates (special rates)
are reserved in the **Brandon House Hotel**, New Ross
until August 31st – please contact Brandon House Hotel,
New Ross, Y34 KR62 [tel: +353 51421703], stating you
are a conference delegate OR check the internet for local
accommodation.