Autumn Newsletter

Connect, Learn, Grow.

Read about our news and latest updates.

It has been a landmark few weeks for the society as summer draws to a close—most notably with the fantastic news that the Exotic Fern Group is now officially registered as a charity! This milestone marks a major step forward for our long-term conservation, education and data initiatives.

Celebrating alongside this news, we officially launched Pteridobase at the RHS Wisley Ferns & Carnivorous Plants Show at RHS Hilltop, where the team also hosted public talks, led glasshouse tours and put on a range of plant displays. Designed for logging, tracking and conserving fern collections, this new online platform has been built with serious growers and collection management in mind, and this newsletter also marks the debut of our integrated Community Spore Bank.

Looking ahead, our calendar shows no signs of slowing down! The countdown is officially on for our flagship EFG Plant Fair on Saturday 12 September at Yattendon Village Hall in Berkshire. Packed with specialist vendors—from tree ferns and rare tropicals to handcrafted ceramics and member-raised spore treasures—it promises to be an unmissable day out for plant lovers. Before Yattendon, the Exotic Fern Group will also be hosting a stand at this year's Welsh Orchid Festival, organised by The Orchid Study Group at the beautiful Aberglasney House and Gardens in Llangathen—do stop by to say hello, browse our plant sales, or catch a live demonstration of Pteridobase! Looking later into September, Peter Blake will guide us through An Introduction to Growing Ferns from Spores for our next EFG Zoom Lecture at the end of the month, while Matthew Reeve takes the stage to deliver a dedicated fern talk for the Newbury u3a Gardening Group.

In this jam-packed edition, we journey to the lush rainforests and savannas of New Guinea's Bird's Head Peninsula with Hani Ristiawan, while Wei Chuan Chang takes us through the resilient, everyday ferns thriving in urban Malaysia. If you're looking to bring tropical species indoors, Alex West shares a practical guide to building low-tech terrariums, and Peter Blake rounds things off with a full report from our fantastic weekend at RHS Wisley.

Read EFG Articles and Reports

A Major Milestone: EFG Registered Charity Status

We are delighted to formally share that the Exotic Fern Group is now officially a registered charity.

This transformation cements our commitment to botanical education, pteridological research and the ex situ conservation of rare and threatened fern species. Registered charity status not only reinforces the legitimacy of our scientific and educational work—including major projects like Pteridobase and *Towards Ethical Collections*—but also opens up vital new avenues for funding, grants and institutional partnerships.

We want to extend a huge thank you to all our associate members, trustees and volunteers who have supported the society throughout this process. As we look ahead, this milestone provides a firm foundation to expand our conservation reach and continue supporting our growing community of growers and enthusiasts.

Over the coming months, we will begin refining our website, governance and policy documents to reflect our charitable objectives. We remain fully committed to maintaining our free digital resources for everyone. Please help us spread the word and get involved by exploring and sharing our resources!

Read more about our transition to being a charity

There are now only a few days to go until our flagship event! Join us for the Exotic Fern Group Plant Fair on Saturday 12 September 2026 at Yattendon Village Hall, Berkshire. Whether you are looking for delicate species for terrariums, striking house plants, glasshouse specimens or hardy exotics for the garden, you will find a vast range of unusual plants to explore and purchase.

Exhibitors & Specialist Stalls
Alongside our dedicated EFG plant sales, we are thrilled to host a great lineup of specialist growers and creators. Hillside Exotic Gardening will be joining us with their spectacular selection of tree ferns, hardy ground ferns and jungle-style foliage companions, while Spicesotic Plants brings a wonderful array of rare tropicals and unusual house plants.

For insectivorous enthusiasts, Andy's Carnivorous Plants will feature an incredible range of specimens ideal for humid setups. We are also delighted to welcome Tom Bellamy (Platycerium UK), curator of the National Collection of Platycerium, sharing specialist knowledge and rare epiphytic stock.

Complementing the plant displays, Mel Greenaway Ceramics will offer beautiful handcrafted ceramics designed for special specimens. Member-raised stock will also feature strongly, with EFG members Stuart Worth and Sean Barton bringing rare division successes, spore-grown treasures and specialist propagated plants.

Community, Advice & Local Attractions
Beyond the nursery tables, the fair is a fantastic opportunity to meet fellow Exotic Fern Group members, exchange cultivation tips and pick up practical advice on growing tricky species.

If you are making a day of it, tea and coffee will be available on site, and there are superb local dining options just moments away. The Pantry is located directly opposite the venue, with The Royal Oak right next door. A short walk brings you to the Renegade Brewery, where you can enjoy excellent food alongside an impressive glass wall overlooking the working brewery. If you wish to extend your excursion, The Living Rainforest is signposted just a few miles away in neighbouring Hampstead Norreys.

Key Information

- Venue: Yattendon Village Hall, Yattendon, Berkshire, RG18 0UE
- Date: Saturday 12 September 2026
- Opening Time: Doors open strictly at 10:30 AM
- Admission: £5 on the door (Under-16s free)—all proceeds go directly towards supporting the society
- Parking: Plenty of parking available on site
- Refreshments: Tea and coffee available throughout the day

We will be sharing further updates across our social media channels in the lead-up to the fair, so be sure to keep an eye on our Instagram and Facebook pages over the coming days. Bring your plant bags, bring a friend and help us make this our best fair yet!

RSVP on the EFG website

Exploring Pteridobase: Our New Digital Platform

We are pleased to introduce Pteridobase, a dedicated online platform designed to help record, classify and track collections across the fern growing community.

Designed with committed collectors, specialist growers and botanic gardens in mind, Pteridobase provides a centralised repository built specifically for pteridological data and collection management. As development is ongoing, we welcome members to explore the system and help us hone the potential of this community resource.

We are also delighted to welcome Miguel Fernandez Voortman and Alex West to the EFG team. Miguel and Alex are focusing specifically on expanding and refining the cultivar and nomenclature data available on the platform. If you would like to volunteer to assist with developing the platform, please do get in touch.

Privacy and Data Security
We recognise that collection security and precise plant location data are important concerns for growers. Pteridobase features flexible privacy settings, allowing you full control over what details you share publicly versus what remains private. Restricting visibility on sensitive entries does not limit your ability to use the full functionality of the platform for your own record keeping.

Future Interactive Workshops
Following our initial introductory seminar in August, we will be hosting further live workshops over the coming months. The next onboarding seminar will take place on Monday 7 September at 7:00 PM UK time.

The content of these live events will vary and focus on specific features of the platform:

- Platform Onboarding: Step-by-step guidance on setting up and navigating your profile
- Collection Management & Conservation: Logging specimens, tracking historical provenance and supporting conservation data
- Propagation & Cultivation Records: Documenting growth notes and trials
- Spore Bank & Plant Exchange: Integrating our community distribution networks directly with database records

Getting Started
You can access the platform directly at pteridobase.org. Keep an eye on the EFG website and social media for forthcoming seminars, and be sure to RSVP for the 7 September onboarding session on our site!

Explore Pteridobase

Launching our Community Spore Bank

We are proud to announce the official launch of the Community Spore Bank, a new and integrated part of our Pteridobase platform.

Facilitating the sharing and distribution of material is one of the most effective ways we can support the long-term conservation and propagation of rare, unusual and vulnerable taxa. The new feature allows anyone to list available spore anonymously as part of a virtual 'Spore Bank'. Everyone can browse the Community Spore Bank, and Pteridobase can instantly connect interested growers to coordinate exchanges. Because the connection is real-time, we can support green spore too!

As a community-driven feature, the Community Spore Bank will continue to evolve and adapt based on your feedback and usage. We encourage all EFG members who have successfully harvested clean spore to log their items, explore the initial listings and help us build a vibrant exchange network for the society.

Visit the Community Spore Bank

New Articles

Hani Ristiawan recounts a botanical journey through the **Bird's Head Peninsula**, highlighting the incredible fern diversity across the varied ecosystems of New Guinea.

Read article

Wei Chuan Chang introduces the resilient, widespread ferns thriving in **Malaysia's urban landscapes** and plantations, calling for greater public appreciation and conservation of these overlooked tropical survivors.

Read article

Alex West details how to construct a **low-tech indoor terrarium**, sharing practical layout methods and substrate setups for cultivating delicate tropical ferns in custom microclimates.

Read article

Events

Wednesday 2 September 2026	EFG Online Meet. 7.00 PM–8.30 PM, BST.
Saturday 5 September 2026 to Sunday 6 September 2026	Welsh Orchid Festival 2026, Carmarthen, UK. 10.00 AM–6.00 PM.
Monday 7 September 2026	Pteridobase Onboarding Seminar. 7.00 PM–8.00 PM, BST.
Saturday 12 September 2026	EFG Plant Fair, Yattendon, Berkshire, UK. 10.30 AM–3.30 PM.
Saturday 19 September 2026	Meeting at the house of Peter Blake and Nick Lodge in Norwich, UK. 11.00 AM–4.00 PM.

Monday 28 September 2026	EFG Zoom Lecutures: Introduction to Growing Ferns from Spores with Peter Blake. 7.00 PM–8.30 PM, BST.
Wednesday 7 October 2026	EFG Online Meet. 7.00 PM–8.30 PM, BST.
Wednesday 4 November 2026	EFG Online Meet. 7.00 PM–8.30 PM, GMT.
Wednesday 2 December 2026	EFG Quiz Night! 7.00 PM–8.30 PM, GMT.

See our full list of events

Reports

Peter Blake reports on the EFG's successful weekend at the **RHS Wisley Ferns & Carnivorous Plants Show**, featuring plant displays, public talks and the official launch of the Pteridobase platform.

Read report

Pteridomania: Ferns in the Headlines

Saving Sri Lanka's Rare Tree Ferns
Miguel Fernandez Voortman, a member of the EFG team based at Leiden University's Hortus botanicus, is helping conservationists in Sri Lanka protect the country's threatened tree ferns. Miguel led a workshop at the University of Peradeniya on growing ferns from spores, including the endangered *Sphaeropteris crinita*. By sharing propagation expertise with local researchers and conservationists, the initiative aims to support the restoration of wild populations and safeguard the remarkable biodiversity associated with these ancient plants.

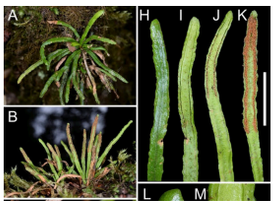
Read article in Nature Today

New Guide Sets the Standard for Living Collections
Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI) has published a new practical guide to accessioning living collections, providing a framework for effective collection management. As an institutional member of BGCI, the EFG welcomes the guide, which reflects the gold-standard approach to collection management underpinning how records are structured in Pteridobase. The guide will help ensure living collections remain valuable resources for research, conservation and collaboration.

Read the BGCI's guide

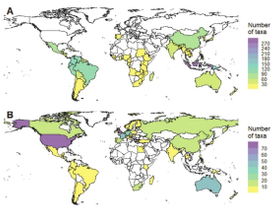
Ancient Ferns Fuelled a Triassic Inferno
New research led by Utrecht University revealed how fern-dominated landscapes may have sustained wildfires during the end-Triassic mass extinction, 201 million years ago. Fossil evidence suggests pioneering ferns rapidly colonised landscapes after forests collapsed, but their vegetation also fuelled repeated fires. The findings show ferns as resilient survivors of environmental catastrophe and active participants in landscapes transformed by climate change.

Read summary on ScienceDaily



Two New Asian Fern Species Described
In July 2026, researchers published the descriptions of two previously unrecognised grammitid ferns, *Scleroglossum stellatum* and *Scleroglossum thailandicum*, in the New Zealand Journal of Botany. The study adds to our understanding of the diversity of *Scleroglossum*, a group of small ferns within the Polypodiaceae, and demonstrates how taxonomic investigation continues to uncover overlooked fern diversity in Asia.

Read article in New Zealand Journal of Botany



Thousands of Endangered Ferns Propagated at NTBG

On 2 August 2026, the National Tropical Botanical Garden (USA) released its 2025–2026 Impact Report, highlighting progress in fern conservation. Its specialist Fern Lab propagated endangered fern species representing thousands of gametophytes, providing living material to safeguard threatened plants and support future conservation. The achievement demonstrates the important role of specialist propagation facilities in preventing rare fern species from disappearing.

Read the NTBG 2025–2026 Impact Report

The Legacy of Pteridomania: Tree Ferns on the Move

New research in Biological Invasions explores how centuries of horticultural enthusiasm transported tree ferns beyond their native ranges. Researchers found that 158 of the world's 795 tree fern species have been introduced elsewhere. The study links much of this movement to the Victorian fern craze, 'pteridomania', and warns of an 'invasion debt', as introduced species may become invasive in the future.

Read article in Biological Invasions

Get in Touch

We are building this society together, so your feedback and ideas are vital to our success. Whether you want to share your growing experiences, volunteer or collaborate with us on new media and creative projects, we want to hear from you. Get in touch today to get involved!

Contact us

The Exotic Fern Group is a charitable incorporated organisation registered in England & Wales. Charity no. 1219251.

Visit our social accounts

Visit our website