



Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew Alpine House

by WilkinsonEyre

When it formally opened in 2006, the Alpine House at Kew's Royal Botanic Gardens was the first new glasshouse to be constructed at Kew for more than 20 years. For this signature project, WilkinsonEyre was tasked with creating a sustainable, energy-efficient growing environment for a world-renowned collection of alpine plants. The brief was for WilkinsonEyre to design a building in step with the innovative, high-quality glasshouses that are traditional to Kew, raise the profile of the alpine collection and create a new focal point for this part of the site.

Central to the project was the question of how a botanic garden should look in the 21st century. While developing as a tourist destination, Kew still needed to maintain its reputation and increase its public profile as a leading centre for scientific research.



Alpines require plenty of light and cool, constantly moving air, so WilkinsonEyre designed a glasshouse conceived as two back-to-back arches, which create a stack effect to draw warm air out of the building. Below ground level, air is pushed into a concrete labyrinth for cooling, and then re-circulated around the perimeter via a series of displacement pipes.

Details

Location: London, UK
Client: Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew
Architect: WilkinsonEyre
Structural Engineer: Dewhurst Macfarlane
Environmental Engineer: Atelier Ten
Quantity Surveyor: Fanshawe
Value: £800k
Completed: March 2005

Awards

Civic Trust Award 2008
Mies van der Rohe Prize 2007 (shortlisted)
RIBA Award 2006
RIBA Stephen Lawrence Prize (shortlisted)
IStructE Award 2006 (shortlisted)
Design Week Award 2006
(Commendation/Museums & Galleries Category)