Treehouses

Royal Botanic Gardens Kew

In Partnership with MoA Museum of Architecture

Project Brief

The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (RBG Kew) is a world-leading plant science institute with two botanic gardens, Kew Gardens in London and Wakehurst in Sussex. Treehouses at Kew in 2025 will be a spectacular outdoor architectural exhibition of five treehouses set across Kew Gardens' iconic 230-acre landscape, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

RBG Kew is pleased to be partnering with the Museum of Architecture (MoA) to create this inspiring project. Treehouses at Kew will be Kew Gardens' main exhibition, running from April 2025 to November 2026, and will provide one of the most compelling visitor experiences in the 2025 London cultural calendar.

Climate change is one of today's most important environmental and social issues, resonating with people worldwide. Architects globally are working to find sustainable solutions. This exhibition and programme create a positive picture of a biodiverse, culturally rich and sustainably developed future – highlighting the need to develop a more balanced relationship with trees and inspiring visitors to do the same. Designed and built using renewable materials, the exhibition will celebrate and explore key aspects of trees and their importance to our world by bringing visitors closer to Kew's Living Collections.

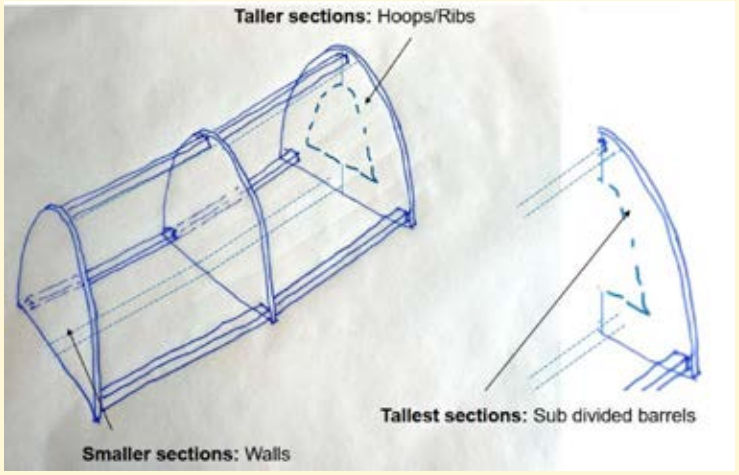
The project will include five treehouses, a book, and an accompanying visitor programme.

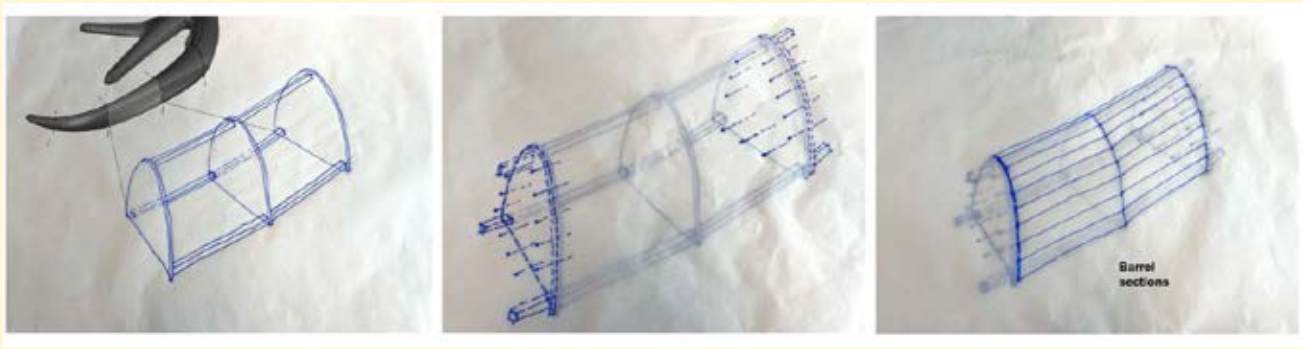
- Three treehouses have been chosen through the Treehouses at Kew Design Competition that explored the relationship between the natural and built environments.
- One treehouses has been a direct commission by an architect from one of Kew's designated International Scientific Priority countries, Brazil.
- One has been a direct commission as a co-designed project in collaboration with young people from Clarendon School.

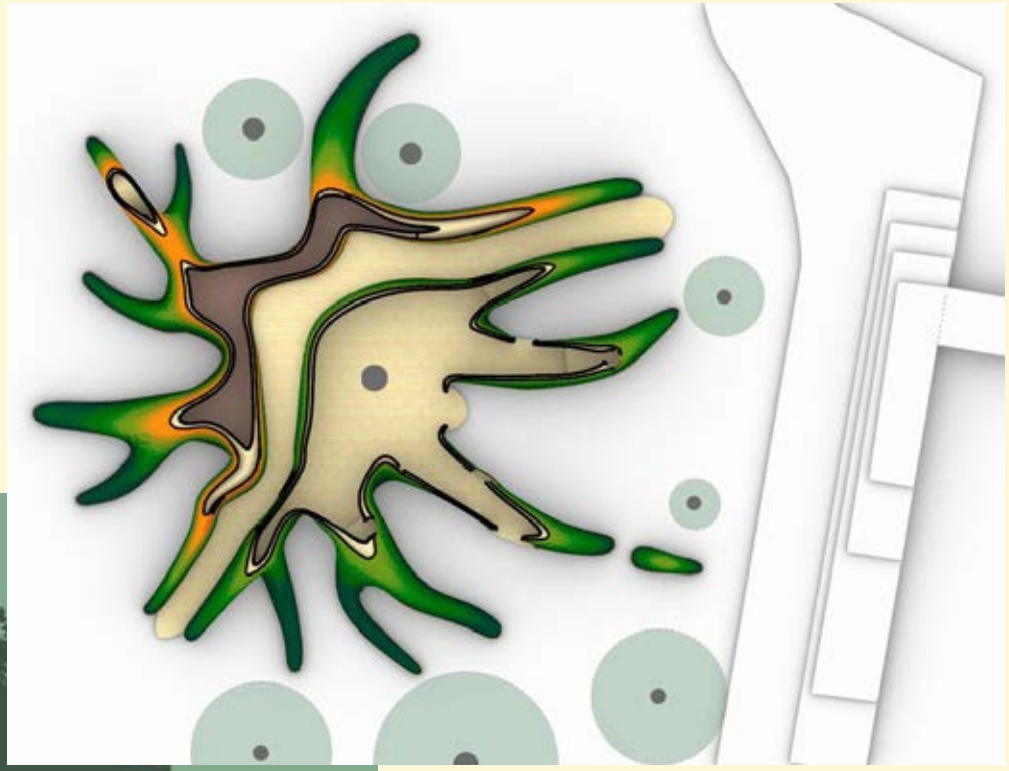
Treehouse 1 - Marko Brajovic Architects

Theme: Tree roots - creating structure and supporting the life of trees

- The structure of Treehouse 1 is a hoop and rib system that is covered by strips of material like a barrel that define the space and provide structure for the latex leaves to be fixed to.
- The natural rubber leaves are from the mixture of latex (Seringueira tree) and natural fibers from the residues of the açaí tree culture.
- This treehouse incorporates a fully accessible ramp







Treehouse 2 - Patrick Fryer and Thomas Randall-Page

Theme: Sustainable Materials - how they are transforming the built environment

- The upper and lower deck will be CLT with an anti-slip coating
- The upper deck will be supported by hardwood tree elements
- The stairs will be CLT risers and treads
- The handrails will use scaffolding equipment and can be recycled at the end of the exhibition
- The upper enclosure will have a stainless steel mesh, fixed as anti-climb and fall protection, cladding in a fabric gauze.

Treehouse 3 - Matt&Fiona and Clarendon School

Theme: This treehouse looks at the senses that are piqued when you are around trees

- This project was designed in collaboration with a local SEN school through a series of workshops.
- This treehouse is fully accessible and incorporates a low ramp that moves you through this structure and where you can also sit as a seat and enjoy being in the pines.
- There is a ‘ribbon’ of pink bungee cords at equal intervals that create enclosure and fall protection on one side.
- There are two resting areas incorporated into this treehouse.
- Bespoke musical instruments allow you to hear the canopy tree noises from below.

Treehouse 5 - Amy Jenkins-Smith and India Aspin

Theme: Play - highlighting Mushrooms and their relationship to trees

- An ode to fungi, this treehouse strives to highlight Kew's world renowned expertise in fungi research and aims to celebrate the beauty and wonder of fungi. It unashamedly plays with both scale and colour.
- This treehouse aims to be accessible to all.
- There is much CLT used in this design. The colours are achieved through paint and acrylic plastic that can be recycled after use.
- The cascading polypore inspired steps of the tree house create a tactile and accessible covered ground level space for those unable to venture further. Those able to use stairs are rewarded with the fungi inspired tree top platforms, one with full height standing space and a second, kids den, with limited headroom.
- Surrounding the tree, creating a sensory play landscape there are a range of interactive play mushrooms, some for climbing &jumping and others of a more musical nature, each element inspired by a different fungi species.

Updated canopy Design

Treehouse 6 - Kevin Kelly Architects and Stand Engineers

Theme: Biomimicry - design based on a pinecone

- The pods are designed to be generous and can accommodate two people should visitors choose to do so.
- The treehouse will be made from horizontal ash rods and vertical lengths of willow. The design uses 3 different types of willow: Flanders Red; Black Maul; Harrisons Willow.
- The treehouse structure is effectively formed of two mirrored, semi-circular braced frames, split diametrically along the axis of the doors, and tied circumferentially.
- All primary structural members are to be formed in cross-laminated timber (CLT). Despite the undulating appearance of the treehouse, all members have been rationalised carefully to be planar, so that all members can easily be prefabricated off site from cutting flat CLT sheets.