

## MEDIA ADVISORY

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**Date:** Monday 21st May 2007  
**Place:** Chelsea Flower Show, Royal Hospital Road, Chelsea, Great Pavilion Stand GPG/10 Linnean Society “Linnaeus’ Legacy – 300 years of naming nature”  
**Time:** 10.00am

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The Linnean Society of London is celebrating the 300th anniversary of the birth of the great Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus with an exhibit at the Chelsea Flower Show. The exhibit is designed to explore ‘Linnaeus’ Legacy – 300 years of naming nature’ that led to our current system of scientific naming and how this system provides us with the tools to communicate effectively about the natural world.

Carl Linnaeus said in his *Philosophia Botanica* (1751), “If you do not know the names of things, the knowledge of them is lost too”. Linnaeus promoted the binomial system that we use today for all plant naming in his book *Species Plantarum* (1753). Scientific names are the common currency for horticulture and connect it with issues of current concern such as conservation and scientific literacy.

The exhibit, the focal point of which will be a new bust in bronze of the young Linnaeus examining a butterfly by the artist and zoologist Anthony Smith, will involve four themes, expressed in the plants used for the display. Plants named for their characteristics will be used to develop the theme of communication. Plants named for their uses will develop a theme of human health and the centrality of plants to medicine. Plants named for places will explore the theme of exploration and conservation of biodiversity, and plants named for people will focus on the future of naming nature.

A miniature U-shaped glaciated valley of wild flowers sweeps up to the bust and more wild flowers surround the plinth which supports the bust. Behind Linnaeus is his own favourite flower, named after him, *Linnaea borealis*, the ‘twinflower’. The valley is supported by two tiers of specimen plants, with explanatory labels, such as might be found in a botanic garden.

The unifying theme of the exhibit will be the continuing legacy begun by Linnaeus – naming of plants and their importance and relevance in today’s world.

The Linnaean Tercentenary is being commemorated internationally throughout 2007 and includes a comprehensive programme of exciting promotional events, scientific meetings, awards, exhibitions and projects featuring the digitisation of the Society’s Collections. Throughout 2007 a wide ranging programme of meetings is planned including joint meetings with the Swedish Embassy, The Royal Society, the Royal Horticultural Society, the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, the Natural History Museum and the Geological Society. The Society will also be working closely with many other organisations worldwide.

**For more information, photos, or to arrange interviews with Dr Sandy Knapp, Botanical Secretary Linnean Society, please contact Judith Diment on +44 (0)7860 162313 or Elaine Shaughnessy Head of Development, Linnean Society on +(44) 020 7434 4479 [www.linnean.org](http://www.linnean.org)**

### Notes for Editors:

Founded in 1788, The Linnean Society of London is the national academy for biology and the oldest such organization in the world. The Society holds Linnaeus’s original library and collections. It is named after the great Swedish naturalist, Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778) who developed the system of binomial nomenclature. This system today provides the fundamental framework for knowledge of the biota of the Earth, supporting effective conservation measures and the sustainable use of biodiversity. Our more than 2000 Fellows come from all walks of life, and represent the range of professional scientists to amateurs interested in natural history. The Fellowship is international and includes world leaders in each branch of biology who use the Society’s premises and publications to communicate new advances in their fields. At the same time, the Society reaches out to future UK biologists through schools and educational programmes. For these reasons, the Linnean Society has been aptly described as ‘A Living Forum for Biology’.