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Botanical Research Institute of Texas Announces 2012 Ian Leese Fellowship in Horticulture Recipient

Megan Proska, long-time BRIT volunteer and graduating senior of Texas A & M University selected for summer internship at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, UK.

FORT WORTH, Texas (**May 8, 2012**) – The [Botanical Research Institute of Texas](#) (BRIT) announced today that Megan Proska of Fort Worth, Texas, is the 2012 recipient of BRIT's annual Ian Leese Fellowship in Horticulture. Proska will work and study at the renowned [Royal Botanic Gardens](#), Kew, UK, for a three-month period from July through September 2012.

Megan will participate in Kew's Voluntary Horticultural Internship Program where she will be assigned to Kew's Great Glasshouses and Training Section. She will provide plant maintenance in the Tropical Nursery while furthering her botanical studies.

"BRIT's annual Ian Leese Fellowship in Horticulture was created to aid and expand the professional and scientific horizons of exceptional students," says Dr. S.H. Sohmer, BRIT's president and director. "As a long-time BRIT volunteer, we have seen Megan's interest and commitment in botany mature. What started as a curiosity in plants has grown into her earning advanced botanical degrees and will, most likely, become her profession. This Fellowship is the perfect complement to Megan's accomplishments."

Megan began volunteering at BRIT in 2003. Her first project was digitizing plants from the Amazon. She continued her volunteer work with BRIT through high school and college. Set to receive Bachelor of Science (B.S.) degrees in both horticulture and entomology, Ms. Proska will graduate in May from Texas A & M University in College Station, Texas. After her internship at KEW, Megan plans on attending graduate school and continuing her studies in botany and entomology. Her ultimate goal is to teach children about plant and insect relationships, while helping build gardens at schools, zoos, and other areas where children learn.

“The Royal Botanic Gardens School of Horticulture is delighted to have Megan Proska as our Ian Leese intern this summer. Leese was a former principal of the school who supported building links between the United Kingdom and US horticulture,” says Martin Staniforth, acting principal, School of Horticulture, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

The Ian Leese Fellowship is an award made possible by the generosity of Judith and Tim Sear, long-time BRIT supporters. The fellowship provides funds for US graduate or undergraduate students majoring in botany and/or horticulture to intern with scientists at the renowned Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, UK. The fellowship includes a one-time stipend of \$5,000 (USD) for the purpose of defraying local housing and other miscellaneous living expenses, as well as travel to and from Kew.

The Ian Leese Fellowship will be available next year, pending the expected continuation of funding. Call for Applications for the 2013 Ian Leese Fellowship will be announced in November 2012, and details will be available on the BRIT web site (www.brit.org).

About the Botanical Research Institute of Texas

Founded in 1987, the Botanical Research Institute of Texas (BRIT) based in Fort Worth, Texas, is an international, scientific research and learning center focused on conservation, knowledge sharing, and studying the diversity of plant life. BRIT conducts extensive global research, including major projects in Texas, Europe, Peru, and the Pacific Islands. In the last 10 years, BRIT scientists have located and described scores of species previously unknown to science. BRIT's herbarium is among the largest in the United States and is the largest U.S. herbarium not part of a university, botanical garden, or broader natural history museum.

In the spring of 2011, BRIT moved into its new, US Green Building Council LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Platinum-certified headquarters located in the Fort Worth Cultural District. BRIT is open to the public Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and on Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Admittance is free. For more information, visit <http://www.brit.org>.

About the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, is a world-famous scientific organization, internationally respected for its outstanding living collection of plants and world-class herbarium, as well as its scientific expertise in plant diversity, conservation, and sustainable development in the U.K. and around the world. Kew Gardens is also a major international visitor attraction. Its landscaped 132 hectares and Kew's country estate, Wakehurst Place, attract nearly two million visitors every year. Kew was made a UNESCO World Heritage Site in July 2003 and celebrated its 250th anniversary in 2009. Wakehurst Place is home to Kew's Millennium Seed Bank, the largest wild plant seed bank in the world. The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and its partners have collected and conserved seed from 10 percent of the world's wild flowering plant species (c. 30, 000 species) and aim to conserve 25 percent by 2020. Learn more: www.kew.org