Stop 372 Adult Tour – Computerized Vents (place sign in Cold Storage), Cold House

Take a look overhead, as conservatory manager Rob Nicholson explains how the Botanic Garden has dealt with one of the challenges of a working in a historical structure.

Rob: Prior to the renovation, a lot of our vents were operated by hand or by very primitive mercury controlled switches. All the vents in all the houses are tied into a computer now, which we can set to respond to a certain range of temperatures, so what we have now is very finely attuned vent controls. They’ll close at one temperature if it’s getting too cold and open at another temperature if it’s getting too hot.

Ventilation is very important when growing plants in a greenhouse. Heat buildup is a significant concern. The glass of the greenhouse admits light but keeps the rising hot air from escaping. The so-called “greenhouse effect” is familiar to you on a smaller scale. Just think how hot your parked car can get when it’s all sealed up and sitting in the sun.

Another concern in greenhouses is disease. The greenhouse environment can be much more conducive to disease than the “great outdoors”. Many of the fungal plant pathogens, such as powdery mildew, love stale humid air because it helps them complete their life cycle. Ventilating the greenhouse and using fans encourages air movement, which can lessen the incidence of disease.