# Kew recreates Nicki Minaj 'stiletto' pose on giant waterlily to spotlight global weigh-off



A short video released by Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew shows a member of staff gingerly balancing on one leg atop a giant Victoria waterlily pad as part of this year’s Waterlily Weigh‑Off. According to Kew, the employee — wearing protective waders rather than high heels to avoid damaging the plant — weighs about 54kg. The clip, published by BBC London, frames the stunt as a playful nod to the viral “Nicki Minaj stiletto” pose and highlights that the global weigh‑off runs through the end of August, with public voting for creativity as well as technical heft.

The plants themselves are remarkable feats of natural engineering. Kew’s own profile of Victoria amazonica notes circular leaves that can reach around three metres across, an upper waxy surface and upturned rims; beneath the pads a ribbed lattice of hollow veins traps air and creates buoyancy. That combination of structure and trapped air — together with sharp spines on the underside that deter grazers — is what allows the pads to bear unusually large loads for their size.

The weigh‑off is a social‑media driven competition that invites botanic gardens and zoos around the world to test how much a single leaf will hold. Organisers in Denver, who helped popularise the event online, recommend using a circular weight‑distributing disc and stacking 20‑ to 25‑pound sandbags (and supplementary gym weights) until the pad shows signs of buckling. Entries are commonly posted on TikTok and Instagram, where the spectacle has proved highly shareable and has boosted public interest in the plants.

Last year’s contest produced the sort of headline‑grabbing numbers that keep the challenge in the public eye: reporters and participating gardens recorded a Missouri Botanical Garden leaf that held roughly 142.1 pounds (about 64.4kg) before failing, with the Naples Botanical Garden posting a roughly 135‑pound effort. Coverage of the 2024 edition also noted that warmer, heated pools can encourage the largest growth in these species, which in turn can increase load capacity, and that careful, gradual loading with standardised weights is the accepted method for measuring a pad’s limit.

Kew’s entry was never billed as a bid to beat those heaviest totals; instead the garden has emphasised creativity and public engagement. The weigh‑off’s People’s Choice strand has previously rewarded imaginative presentations — for example a flamingo‑themed entry that captured popular votes — and Kew’s public‑facing Waterlily House was designed to showcase these signature plants and educate visitors about their horticultural and cultural history.

There is, however, a safety and conservation angle worth noting. The Nicki Minaj‑inspired balancing pose has been criticised by safety experts when attempted in hazardous contexts, and news outlets have urged caution over imitating viral stunts that can be risky. Kew’s use of waders and the controlled environment of its display pool reflect an awareness of both human safety and the need to avoid stressing or damaging the plants; the garden has presented the clip as a light‑hearted, carefully managed entry rather than an endorsement of risky copying.

Beyond the spectacle, the weigh‑off underlines how a simple, well‑framed natural curiosity can draw attention to botanical science. Organisers and participating institutions say the contest has been effective at driving visitor interest online and in person, while also providing an opportunity to explain the biology behind an extraordinary plant. Kew’s video, and the wider stream of entries, demonstrates how social media, careful stewardship and clear explanation can combine to turn a horticultural oddity into a broader educational moment.

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* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/videos/cjw6qe07jwwo), [[2]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/videos/cjw6qe07jwwo)
* Paragraph 2 – [[3]](https://www.kew.org/plants/giant-waterlily)
* Paragraph 3 – [[4]](https://www.botanicgardens.org/blog/waterlily-weigh), [[6]](https://www.foxweather.com/lifestyle/victoria-waterlily-weigh-off-competition-winner-tiktok-botanic-garden)
* Paragraph 4 – [[5]](https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2024/09/15/missouri-water-lily-sand-contest/), [[6]](https://www.foxweather.com/lifestyle/victoria-waterlily-weigh-off-competition-winner-tiktok-botanic-garden)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/videos/cjw6qe07jwwo), [[4]](https://www.botanicgardens.org/blog/waterlily-weigh), [[3]](https://www.kew.org/plants/giant-waterlily)
* Paragraph 6 – [[7]](https://www.nbcchicago.com/entertainment/entertainment-news/nicki-minaj-challenge-safety/), [[1]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/videos/cjw6qe07jwwo)
* Paragraph 7 – [[4]](https://www.botanicgardens.org/blog/waterlily-weigh), [[5]](https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2024/09/15/missouri-water-lily-sand-contest/), [[6]](https://www.foxweather.com/lifestyle/victoria-waterlily-weigh-off-competition-winner-tiktok-botanic-garden)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/videos/cjw6qe07jwwo> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/videos/cjw6qe07jwwo> - BBC London published a short video showing Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew staff participating in a Waterlily Weigh‑Off entry. The clip depicts a Kew team member standing on a Victoria waterlily leaf while wearing waders and balancing on one leg, referencing the Nicki Minaj stiletto challenge, and noting her bodyweight at about fifty‑four kilograms. The piece explains the Weigh‑Off runs through August and highlights Kew’s creative public entry which might win a public‑choice prize. The report also links to Kew’s displays and invites viewers to follow BBC London on social media and to submit story ideas by email for further information.
3. <https://www.kew.org/plants/giant-waterlily> - Kew’s plant profile for Victoria amazonica describes the giant waterlily as one of the world’s largest aquatic plants, with circular leaves reaching up to three metres across. The page explains the leaves have upturned rims and a waxy upper surface, while the undersides show a ribbed lattice of hollow veins and sharp spines; trapped air in the ribs provides buoyancy that enables the pads to support considerable weight. Kew notes the species’ cultural history, its role in horticulture and that the Waterlily House at Kew was specifically designed to display these remarkable plants to visitors to educate and inspire public.
4. <https://www.botanicgardens.org/blog/waterlily-weigh> - The Denver Botanic Gardens’ blog outlines the Waterlily Weigh‑Off, a social‑media led competition inviting public gardens and zoos worldwide to test how much weight Victoria waterlily leaves can hold. Organisers describe using a circular weight distributor and layering 20–25 pound sandbags and smaller weights until the pad begins to buckle. The blog lists participating institutions, records the 2024 rankings and notes creative entries that earned a People’s Choice award, such as the Toledo Zoo’s flamingo entry. The post explains how upturned rims and hollow veins filled with air give the pads buoyancy and encourages followers to view entries on TikTok.
5. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2024/09/15/missouri-water-lily-sand-contest/> - The Washington Post reported on the global Waterlily Weigh‑Off, describing how horticulturists across participating gardens stacked sandbags and weights on Victoria leaves to gauge capacity. The story highlights the Missouri Botanical Garden’s winning leaf, which held 142.1 pounds before buckling, and explains the contest’s origin from Denver Botanic Gardens’ earlier experiments. Reporters note participants used 20‑pound sandbags and gym weights, and that heated pools can help plants grow larger. The piece describes the underside’s ribbed, air‑filled lattice and sharp spines that provide buoyancy and protection, and notes the weigh‑off helped engage wider public interest through viral social media videos nationally.
6. <https://www.foxweather.com/lifestyle/victoria-waterlily-weigh-off-competition-winner-tiktok-botanic-garden> - Fox Weather covered the weigh‑off and confirmed the Missouri Botanical Garden’s victory, reporting a waterlily held roughly 142 pounds and edged out Naples Botanical Garden’s 135‑pound effort. The article outlines how Denver Botanic Gardens organised submissions via TikTok and Instagram using the hashtag and states 17 gardens entered. It explains methods included using a weight‑distributing disc, 20‑pound sandbags, and gym weights added gradually until the leaf began to sink. Fox Weather also notes some gardens used playful or creative entries for public vote, while scientific explanations describe upturned rims and hollow veins trapping air to make the massive pads buoyant.
7. <https://www.nbcchicago.com/entertainment/entertainment-news/nicki-minaj-challenge-safety/> - NBC Chicago explains the Nicki Minaj stiletto challenge, a viral social media trend featuring participants balancing on one foot or on top of objects while imitating a distinctive pose by the rapper. The article traces the meme’s origins to a clip from Minaj’s 2013 video and describes how users escalated the stunt into risky balancing acts using bottles, cans, and various props, often wearing heels. NBC quotes safety experts warning the challenge can be hazardous, and notes celebrities and influencers have joined or reacted. The piece offers guidance on safer alternatives and cautions participants to avoid dangerous setups altogether online.