The Botanic Cottage was first built in 1766 on Haddington Place, Leith Walk, Edinburgh, when the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh was located here during the Scottish Enlightenment. It was commissioned by John Hope, the King’s Botanist for Scotland, and served as both a centre for botanical research as the head gardener’s home. Students taught during this time included Benjamin Rush, one for the founding fathers of the United States, and Thomas Charles Hope who discovered the element strontium and also taught Charles Darwin.

However, when the Royal Botanic Garden moved to its current location in Inverleith in 1823 this modest but important building was left behind. Despite being somewhat disfigured the cottage survived the following centuries until it was threatened with demolition in 2008. Saved from this fate the cottage structure was carefully recorded and moved to Inverleith where the original building materials were stored whilst further historical research and funding was undertaken.

The building, which was designed by John Adam, eldest of the Adam brothers, and extended by James Craig in the 1780s, was rebuilt in 2016, two hundred and fifty years after its original build, and serves once again as an educational ‘hub’ within the Demonstration Garden on the north side of the Botanic Garden Edinburgh. Traditional materials and finishes were employed during the construction such as lath and lime plaster internally and lime harling/ limewashing externally, and benefits from universal access and subtle ecological additions such as solar panels and an air-source heat pump.