



# Tree Trail

## at Eastcote House Gardens

Explore Eastcote House Gardens and learn more about some of the site's beautiful trees on this short trail around the gardens.

Long Meadow, Site of Importance for Nature Conservation



The trail will help you to explore most of this tranquil open space.

Tour the traditional walled garden and the Jubilee Orchard (planted in 2011) to round off your visit.



## About the orchards

The apple trees in the Old Orchard are between 40 and 50 years old. Some are past their best for fruiting.

The Friends of Eastcote House Gardens planted a new orchard in 2011 ready to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012. The planting meant that the new Jubilee Orchard would be mature when all the trees in the Old Orchard were past their best.

The new trees - older varieties of apples and pears - are all grafted onto a dwarfing rootstock, which means they will never become too tall and unmanageable.

During the 15th century many orchards were lost, mainly due to the Wars of the Roses. Land workers were called to fight, many of whom perished, and villages, orchards and crops were burnt and destroyed. King Henry VIII objected to paying high prices to import apples from France so sent his head gardener to France to bring back cuttings to start fruit growing again in England.

## In the Old Orchard:

### 1 Handkerchief tree or Dove tree - *Davidia involucrata*

The tree was first discovered in China in 1868 by Père David, a Jesuit missionary.

In 1899, nurseryman Harry Veitch commissioned plant hunter Ernest Wilson to travel to China to bring back seeds. After many incredible adventures the seeds arrived back in England.

The *Davidia* flowers in May, with seed capsules in September.

### 2 Quince - *Cydonia oblonga*

Introduced to England by Eleanor of Castile in 1254 when she married Edward, the eldest son of Henry III. The tree is native to south west Asia and is related to medlar and hawthorn.

All modern pear trees are grafted onto the Quince root stock. The fruit can only be eaten if cooked. It is often made into jelly to be served with meats, or a small amount can be used to flavour apples.

### 3 a) Black mulberry - *Morus nigra* b) White mulberry - *Morus alba*

Native to the Middle East, the black mulberry was introduced into Britain during the 1100s.

James I wanted to start a silk industry in England and imported hundreds of black mulberry trees to feed the silk worms, only to find that they only eat white mulberry leaves.

The black mulberry has the best fruit for eating whereas the fruit of the white mulberry is almost tasteless.

### 4 a) Corkscrew hazel - *Corylus avellana 'contorta'*

#### b) Hazel hedge - *Corylus avellana*

The corkscrew hazel is a natural mutation of the native hazel (there is a hedge at the rear of the Old Orchard) and makes a good ornamental tree. It was found growing in Gloucestershire in 1863.

The native hazel has historically been used as a crop and was coppiced to make hurdles, dead hedges and supports. Hazel charcoal is the best for making gunpowder.

## Outside the Old Orchard:

### 5 Yew - *Taxus baccata*

The yew is a native tree that can live for up to 5,000 years. This group of trees here were planted more than 300 years ago.

The fruit of the yew is poisonous but other parts of the tree are useful. The famous long bows used by the British at the battle of Agincourt [25 October 1415] were made of yew. One of the first chemotherapy drugs was made from yew needles.

### 6 Wellingtonia (also known as Giant redwood) - *Sequoiadendron giganteum*

This tree is native to North America and the first seeds were sent to England in 1853.

The earliest planting of the trees was at the country home of the Duke of Wellington, after whom the tree is named. The trees can live for 3,400 years.

Stand under the tree and look up at the wonderful 'cathedral effect' of the branches.

**7** **Caucasian wingnut (also known as Caucasian walnut) - *Pterocarya fraxinifolia***

Native to Russia, the Caucasian wing nut was introduced to England after 1800.

It's a very handsome tree with green catkins in April/May, and can grow to 30 metres tall.

**8** **Indian horse chestnut - *Aesculus indica***

Native to the Himalayas and introduced to Britain in 1850, the Indian horse chestnut grows to a height of 9 to 12 metres and a spread of 11 to 15 metres. It's smaller than the more common horse chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) which will grow to a height of 40 metres.

The Indian horse chestnut appears to be resistant to the leaf miner which attacks the larger and more well known Turkish variety, turning leaves brown in the middle of summer.

**9** **Turkey oak (also known as Wainscot oak and Iron oak) - *Quercus cerris***

The Turkey oak was introduced from Turkey in 1735 and is native to Asia Minor.

The tree is faster growing than the English Oak, with longer leaves and the acorns have a mossy covering. The wood is not as hard as English Oak and is only suitable for indoor use.

**10** **The Mighty Oak - *Quercus robur***

Of all the trees, the native oak must be the most famous.

This tree is between 300 and 400 years old. Oaks can live for up to 1,000 years. It takes a tree 40 years to produce acorns and during its lifetime, it can produce up to 42 million of them. The oak is the most wildlife friendly of all trees, giving a home to 280 species of insects and 300 species of lichen.

The wood was used for centuries in building homes and ships. The oak timbers in both the Stables here in Eastcote House Gardens, and the Great Barn in Ruislip, were installed more than 500 years ago and are still holding the buildings together.

**11** **Sycamore - *Acer pseudoplatanus***

A very common non-native tree, the sycamore spreads easily from seed. It is a type of maple. The date of its arrival into Britain is not known but possibly as early as the 14th century.

Used in parks and as street trees, the sycamore can become invasive in native woodlands. The wood has many uses - from making musical instruments to flooring.

These are just a few of the 300 trees living at Eastcote House Gardens. Many of the trees are native to the British Isles with others introduced over the centuries.