



Eastcote House Gardens – Visitors' guide



Welcome to our beautiful gardens! We hope this guide will help you to get the most from your visit.

Our website features useful information on the history of Eastcote House (<http://eastcotehousegardens.weebly.com/history.html>), the restoration project (<http://eastcotehousegardens.weebly.com/restoration-project.html>) and the recent archaeological digs (<http://eastcotehousegardens.weebly.com/archaeology.html>).

1. Start your tour in the **Courtyard** outside the **Stables**.

Stables:

17th Century, Grade II listed, restored 2014/15.

Gardens Café:

This was built 2014/15 on the site of the Coach House, which was demolished in 1964.

Eastcote House:

With your back to the Stables, you can see a **Weeping Ash tree** to the right of the long path: this marks the site of **Eastcote House**, which was demolished in 1964.

2. From the Courtyard, head toward the vehicle entrance – N.B.: please take care because of vehicle movements.

Jubilee Gates:

These were installed in 2012 to commemorate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee.

One gate has the **Royal Cypher** and the other has the **Hillingdon Coat of Arms**

(for further information go to: <https://www.hillingdon.gov.uk/article/2575/Coat-of-arms>)

3. Walk back towards the courtyard: half way along the drive on your left, under a magnificent **London plane** tree is a **Sarcen Stone**.

Sarcen Stones:

These are sandstone, and were thought to bring good luck – this is why they were frequently placed near the entrances to dwellings. They can be found locally in High Grove Woods and at Manor Farm Ruislip. Sandstone is found mainly in the Chiltern belt, which includes Eastcote: therefore, it may be that these stones have not been put there deliberately.

4. At the top of the drive turn left along the side of the stables, then left again onto Dovecote Meadow. On your immediate left is the **ha-ha**.

Ha-ha:

A ha-ha is a ditch with a flint stone wall. The age of this structure is not known.

The purpose of a ha-ha was to stop livestock straying into the formal gardens without the need



for a fence, which would spoil the view from the house. The practice was introduced into England during the 18th Century, and was widely used by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown.

Ha-ha walls consist of a sunken stone wall, the top of which is level with the garden, with a deep ditch on the far side: this forms an effective barrier to livestock. The unusual name is believed to have derived from the exclamations of surprise uttered by those who encountered these hidden walls.

5. From the ha-ha, walk across the meadow towards the river: a boardwalk leads you to an outdoor classroom, a children's natural play area, and the **River Pinn** with a dipping platform.

By the boardwalk, you will find a post with a plaque featuring an image of a woodpecker. There are 10 images for children to find on the *Wildlife Images Trail* – follow this link if you would like a Trail Guide:

https://eastcotehousegardens.weebly.com/uploads/1/1/0/6/11066781/wildlife_images_trail_leaflet_2018_-_final_pdf_1.pdf

River Pinn:

The River Pinn originates in Harrow Weald and flows into the Frays River, a distributary of the River Colne. It is nearly 12 miles long.

It runs through Pinner, Eastcote and Ruislip: the latter derives its name from "rush leap" - this being a reference to the width of the river in the area. It then runs through Ickenham and onto Uxbridge, where it passes through the grounds of the old RAF Uxbridge site and Brunel University. The Pinn continues on to Cowley where it joins the Frays River at Yiewsley. The Frays joins the Colne south-west of Drayton Mill. The Colne in turn flows into the Thames near Isleworth, and eventually flows out to sea.

Once this was a good fishing stream. In 1804, at the time of the Ruislip enclosure, there was a right of way three feet wide along the banks of the Pinn so that the Lord of the Manor and his lessees and servants could enjoy the fishing despite the allotments nearby. In those days there was far more water in the Pinn.

During the Second World War the river was temporarily dammed near Pinner High Street to serve as a water supply for putting out fires from air raids.

6. Go across the **Sheila Liberty Memorial Bridge** into **Long Meadow**. [The bridge was named in honour of Sheila Liberty for all the conservation work she carried out]

Long Meadow:

This is an 11-acre ancient water meadow, now a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation. Opposite the bridge stand 5 young elm trees. These were planted in 2011 as part of the **Conservation Foundation's project Ulmus Londinium**. There are ancient oaks and ash trees within the meadow recognised by the Woodland Trust.

The EHG website has full listing of the plants, trees and recorded data of the meadow.

7. Retrace your steps across the boardwalk to the **Dovecote**, which is straight ahead.

Dovecote:

The 18th century brick dovecote, which is Grade II listed, has been fully restored. A dovecote is a structure intended to house pigeons or doves. They generally contain pigeonholes for the birds to nest. Historically pigeons and doves were an important food source and were kept for their eggs, meat and dung.

8. On leaving the Dovecote turn left – ahead is the **Topiary Garden**.

Topiary Garden:

This was first planted in the 1980s. The wall linking the Stables to the Dovecote once contained a boiler house which heated the greenhouses on the other side of the wall.

The topiary subjects are yew and box. The small box parterre follows the original Tudor idea of decorative fillings by using coloured gravel, while the use of bedding plants in parterres came at a later date.

9. The gate near the Dovecote leads under a wisteria covered archway to the **Old Orchard**.

Old Orchard:

This is richly planted with both black & white mulberry, fig, apples, walnut and quince [*cydonia oblonga*]. The remains of lime wash can be seen on the wall, where the greenhouses once stood. At the rear of Old Orchard there is a hazel hedge with a hornbeam hedge behind it. The rockery is situated opposite the Gardens Café.

10. Turn left at the top of the wisteria arch into the **Walled Garden**.

Walled Garden:

The walls [Grade II listed] were restored in 2014/15. The exact age of the walls is unknown, but there have been many alterations over the centuries. At the base of the walls some very narrow bricks can be found: it is possible that these bricks came from the medieval dwelling known as Hopkyttes, which was demolished in the late 16th Century when Eastcote House was built.

The garden is symmetrical with a sundial in the middle. The four herb beds were replanted for the Queen's 90th Birthday in 2016. Follow this link for a herb garden information leaflet:

https://eastcotehousegardens.weebly.com/uploads/1/1/0/6/11066781/herb_beds_leaflet_-_children.pdf

11. Leave the Walled Garden by the top gate. To your left is the wild orchard, containing crab apples, wild plum, wild pear and damson. To your right up the slope is the Jubilee Orchard, which was planted in the autumn of 2011 to celebrate the 2012 Jubilee.

Activity sheets for children can be downloaded from the following link:

<http://eastcotehousegardens.weebly.com/activities.html>

Working in conjunction with the London Borough of Hillingdon, the gardens are maintained by the voluntary group the Friends of Eastcote House Gardens. We hope you enjoyed your visit – do look out for future events at the gardens.