



## HIGH BEECHES GARDENS

Photo: Sarah Bray

Even by the world-class standards of the Sussex Weald gardens, High Beeches (just off the A23 near Handcross and virtually adjacent to Nymans) is special. Although not in the celebrity class of the likes of Wakehurst Place or Sheffield Park, there's something most beguiling in the way it looks across to Devil's Dyke, then leads down a hillside through a series of glades and larger spaces between the champion trees, towering redwoods and stately Japanese maples. Giant rhubarb is mirrored in a pond, and rhododendrons and rare Far East exotica bloom. This is the first garden created by the Loders, who went on to develop gardens at Leonardslee (alas, closed) and Wakehurst. The sense of continuity is striking: Colonel Loder, grandson of the original owner, was in occupation for 60 years until the Boscawens took over in 1966 (they still live next door); the Colonel's Seat marks his favourite viewpoint. They re-engaged the Loders' gardener, Eric Stockton, who worked here for over half a century until his death in 1979. High Beeches is still very much family-run. Sarah Bray, the owner, takes much pride in the acid wildflower meadow. 'It hasn't been cultivated in at least 60 years; we just mow it once a year. In spring it's a mass of orchids, daisies, vetch, hay rattle and cowslips.' It's a garden of year-round interest, with glowing blue willow gentians filling a valley and wonderful autumn colours too. There's a handily sited tea room with a sheltered courtyard. **More details of this and other Slow pleasures in Tim Locke's Slow Sussex (£14.99 from Skylark, Lewes Tourist Information Centre and Barbican House). Visit [facebook.com/slowsussex](https://www.facebook.com/slowsussex) for details of walks he is doing.**