

Larachmhor Wild Woodland Garden

Key



Garden Facilities and Features

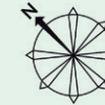
- A** Entrance
- B** Holms' House: Unfinished in 1938 - Now Derelict (Do not enter)
- C** Garden Store
- D** Cedar Hut
- E** Brennan's Jubilee Hut

Locations

- 1** Bambuselem
- 2** Native Woodland Grove (2012)
- 3** Railway Bank
- 4** Chilean Grove
- 5** The Cathedral of Western Hemlock
- 6** Holms' Nursery
- 7** John Holms' Hillside
- 8** Birch Woodland
- 9** Fortunea Forest
- 10** The New Burn
- 11** Knoll Viewpoint
- 12** Beech Bank
- 13** Old Beech Root

A830 to Arisaig and Mallaig

0 100m 200m
Scale (approximate only)



Suggested Route

- 0** Start / Main Gate
- 0a** Native woodland (Diversion)
- 1** Upper drive
- 2** Mid drive
- 3** Descent to the lower drive
- 3a** Beneath bambuselem mound (Diversion)
- 4** Lower drive
- 5** Bridge approach
- 6** Beside Cedar Hut
- 7** Into Holms' nursery
- 8** Following the burn
- 9** New burnside plantings
- 10** The large-leaved rhododendron grove
- 11** Around Brennan's hut
- 12** The Panorama
- 13** Rhododendron bank
- 14** Chilean corner
- 15** Into the southern arm
- 15a** Climbing high (diversion)
- 16** Cunningham's fir bank
- 16a** Tree fern territory (diversion)
- 17** The new zig-zag burn
- 17a** Burn ascent (diversion)
- 18** The southern limits
- 18a** Ascending beech bank (diversion)
- 19** The Cathedral
- 20** Ascent to the exit

Please respect this unique environment: • Please do not damage the plantings • Please remove all your rubbish from the site, especially dog-bags!
If not using dog-bags and your dog goes to the loo... Get a stick and flick the poo off the path... Is what we would like you to do.

A Tour of Larachmhor Wild Woodland Garden

This double loop route, mostly on major tracks extends to 2 km in total, with suggested adventurous diversions [*] that add up to a further 1-2 km. It takes in all the key areas of the Garden and, according to season, showcases some of its key collections and finer features.

The descent into the garden and circuit of the level loop around the heart of the garden is c.1km and with care and some effort can (and has regularly been) undertaken in suitable off road wheelchairs.

0 START

From the Main Gate follow the track, entering the Garden proper at the Map panel, the site of the original garden entrance.

*0a NATIVE WOODLAND DIVERSION

Here a slightly overgrown diversion path follows the line of the old road to the left, just outside the wall, to reach a 21st century planting of specially sourced native tree species.

1 UPPER DRIVE

Descend beneath the canopy of overarching beech and birch trees. On the left the drive is flanked by a bank of sweet scented yellow azaleas (flowers late May/June) and rambling climbing creamy white *Rosa filipes* scrambles up an ash tree to over 50 feet.

2 MID DRIVE

As the drive briefly levels out, just after passing a damp area dominated by giant South American rhubarb, a massive *Magnolia veitchii* can be seen on the right (one of Britain's largest); it is covered in creamy pink-tinged blooms, that precede leaf emergence, in May.

3 DESCENT to the LOWER DRIVE

A grove of massive rhododendrons rises on both sides of the track, including on the left the dark spire of a fine *Rh arboreum* and to the right a range of species with massive coloured tree-like trunks. A small burn is culverted beneath the drive where a rocky bluff on the left supports a few unusual tender rhododendrons.

*3a BENEATH BAMBUSELEM MOUND DIVERSION

Opposite this a hint of a path over the culvert leads down and away south through a grove of splendid 1970's additions to the rhododendron collection, an area that is progressively being opened up and cleared of encroaching bamboo.

4 LOWER DRIVE

As the overhead canopy recedes and you can glimpse the hills rising above the east side of Larachmhor, the drive is flanked by colourful Japonica azaleas which bloom in a range of ripe pastel shades in high summer. As the dark wall of Hemlocks recedes on your right, two lichen-encrusted shrubs are worthy of note, a South American azara, bearing vanilla-scented tiny yellow pompom flowers in later spring, and a compact Japanese enkianthus, with clusters of pendulous creamy bell flowers in early summer and excellent autumn colour to follow.

5 BRIDGE APPROACH

New plantings as you proceed include unusual bamboos, and at ground level small groups of exotic cobra lilies and podophyllums that erupt during May. As the canopy closes over, a large Chilean lantern bush, bearing hanging crimson flowers in May, rises to the left, and on the opposite side is a bank of the low, shrubby blue-foliaged *Rh calostrotum*, which bears dark purple flowers in spring and sometimes on through several months of

the year. Beyond this weeps a medium sized Persian Ironwood, which has brilliant flaming red foliage in autumn.

6 BESIDE CEDAR HUT

Across the Bridge, turn left between the Garage garden store and to the right, the Cedar Hut (built in the 1960's), one of two bothies used as accommodation for the workparties who maintain Larachmhor. A massive multi-stemmed katsura tree overhangs this bothy, a tree renowned for its autumn colour and also the strong aroma of caramel that arises from its declining leaves.

7 INTO HOLMS' NURSERY

You are following the banks of the Larachmhor Burn, the major water course that drains through the Garden. A diminishing number of moss-cloaked old beech trees arch over the water – the vestiges of what probably began as a nursery boundary hedge in the late 19th century. To the right a jungle of diverse specimen rhododendrons fill the view. Now approaching a century in age, many remain where they were set out by Holms for growing on before their planned, but never fulfilled, planting out. Some 30 species can be seen in this area, flowering above an unusual tight-spaced forest of twisted, and increasingly leaning, trunks.

8 FOLLOWING THE BURN

As the track turns right towards Brennan's Hut, continue directly ahead on a minor path into the woodland, where the ground is carpeted with wild garlic in early spring. Massive lime trees (with bushy bases) and a pair of fine specimen monkey puzzles can be seen to the right. Several colourful large 1920's rhododendrons and later 1960's LGA plantings flourish here. As the burn curves eastwards (right) you pass beneath spreading branches of an expansive New Zealand daisy bush, which flowers in late summer.

9 NEW BURNSIDE PLANTINGS

On either side as you progress to more open ground are exciting recent additions to the collection, including the Bhutanese *Rh kesangiae*, A superb dark specimen *Rh arboreum* rises on the far side of the burn, while a special wych elm is maturing on the right, planted in 2012 to celebrate jointly the 50th anniversary of the LGA's involvement at Larachmhor, and the completion of the new Brennan's Hut . Ahead rises a tall Chinese Chusan palm.

10 THE LARGE-LEAVED RHODODENDRON GROVE

Continue beside the burn working your way through a spectacular series of massive Rhododendron trunks, including the plum-coloured *Rh barbatum*, and the cinnamon *Rh griffithianum*, which bears blousy, pure white, soft-scented blooms. A little further on rises an exceptionally tall plant of the very large-leaved *Rh sinogrande*. This is the very specimen that was the first to be flowered outdoors in Britain – an achievement Holms celebrated by taking a truss to show to the Regius Keeper of the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh, famously accompanied by a piper as he marched from Princes St. ! Ahead loom the arches of the road and railway bridges, marking the northern limit of the garden.

11 AROUND BRENNAN'S HUT

Retrace your steps slightly and take a path that sweeps left into the open, passing beside more fine rhododendrons, including a colourful tubular-flowered purple *Rh cinnabarinum*. Steadily establishing recent plantings of wild collected rhododendrons, small Chusan palms and tree ferns flank the path as the view opens out into the fertile bowl that hosts the heart of the Garden. Brennan's Hut is the primary base for Garden workparties and sits on the footprint of the similar but simpler bothy that John

Brennan occupied as Larachmhor's sole gardener for 30 years from 1929.

12 THE PANORAMA

Pause and look back north and west from beside the bothy to take in the spectacle: in the middle ground a stand of young Japanese umbrella pines leads on to a spinney of southern hemisphere willow-leaved podocarps; all around several later 20th century rhododendron plantings are developing; beyond these an arc of massive 1920's specimen rhododendrons follow the curve of the burn; rising above the scene the skyline is framed by a line of western hemlocks that both shelter the site and obscure the adjacent road and railway. In any season, but especially during Springtime as the rhododendron flowering reaches its peak, this is an unrivalled panorama, evoking the true spirit of Larachmhor.

13 RHODODENDRON BANK

On the open bank rising behind the bothy an extensive new planting of Chinese wild origin rhododendrons was initiated in 2013. At its foot, to the south east of the bothy, is a poignant specimen of *Rh* John Holms, a fine red hybrid named in honour of the Larachmhor Garden's founder.

Continue south from the bothy, either on the wide lower path, or for an enhanced, slightly elevated view of the plantings, cross the culverted bridge over the drainage ditch and follow the upper pathway. The rising bank along the left side of this route is studded with established specimen rhododendrons from the 1970s. To the right Holm's dense nursery of 1920's rhododendrons blankets the view.

14 CHILEAN CORNER

Around the junction to the main drive, the ground has been cleared in preparation for an exciting new planting of specimens from Chile that will be developed from 2020. Proceeding ahead (south) on the drive, a Chilean holly bush, bearing unusual tubular two-tone yellow-red flowers is passed on the left, behind which the increasingly rocky eastern slopes of the garden are cloaked in extensive semi-natural beech/birch woodland.

15 INTO THE SOUTHERN ARM

Continue along the slightly meandering low level track, passing an array of exotic trees and shrubs, including a fine small-leaved southern beech, *Nothofagus fusca*, a delicate Himalayan sorbus (*S. koehniiana*), as well as elegant specimens of camellia, cornus and other flowering shrubs.

*15a CLIMBING HIGH DIVERSION

Just before reaching another grove of gnarled rhododendron trunks, a sporting diversion is possible following the old upper trackway that steps up slightly to the left and climbs steadily towards the high south eastern corner of the Garden, passing extensive stands of massive 1920's rhododendrons blended into the woodlands. Taking this route allows a descent to the main track by meandering down through the upper rhododendron groves, and cautiously down the steep beech slopes at the south end of the garden [see 18].

16 CUNNINGHAM'S FIR BANK

Continuing through further banks of rhododendrons, above which rises, almost invisibly from beneath, a grand specimen of the handkerchief tree, named for its pendulous floppy white bracts in mid summer. Further on a stately conifer soars out of the shrubbery on your left. This Chinese fir (*Cunninghamia lanceolata*) is believed to be the tallest in Britain. The interwoven stems of the rhododendrons at its foot create a bizarre spectacle.

*16a TREE FERN TERRITORY DIVERSION

Immediately before this, a recently cleared adventurous loop path leads off into the undergrowth, passing a series of newly planted tree ferns. This route intersects the new southern burn where there is a choice of descending to the main track below [see 18] or ascending to join the upper trackway [see 15].

17 THE NEW ZIG-ZAG BURN

Proceeding further south on the main track through a corridor of yellow luteum azaleas, sweetly- scented in high summer, more open ground emerges, but much of the vegetation on the left is steadily being swamped by a worryingly rampant form of schisandra, a vigorous liana from Asia.

A new burn was created here to improve drainage from beneath the upgraded road. Exciting new streamside plantings include unusual scheffleras (ivy trees) and drifts of candelabra primulas.

*17a BURN ASCENT DIVERSION

A sporting ascent beside the burn will link both to the upper trackway [see 15] and the diversion loop [see 16]. It ascends past the umbrella-like forms of the exotic scheffleras, with the hill slope to the right blanketed by a splendid stand of naturally regenerated *Rh calophytum*.

18 THE SOUTHERN LIMITS

Views across the fields towards Arisaig have been opened up in the wake of devastation caused by the January 2012 hurricane. Continuing south you pass, on your left , a superbly sculptured example of the shallow root-plate of a massive overturned (but still growing) beech. As you reach a steeply descending burn you are near the end of the track. Ahead stands a large European silver fir, the sole survivor of several fine specimens that once graced Larachmhor. This marks the limit of the garden ground. Return back along the main lower track as different perspectives are afforded into the encroaching vegetation, as well as occasional views to the surrounding hills.

*18a ASCENDING BEECH BANK DIVERSION

The woodland rises beside you, a steep ascent of which will take you to the end of the upper trackway [see 15], which could be reversed to make a loop back towards the heart of the garden.

19 THE CATHEDRAL

Having retraced your steps to the Chilean corner, with a glimpse up to Brennan's Hut ahead, turn left and follow the main drive back westwards. A huge fallen Monterey cypress trunk provides shelter for a number of recent rhododendron plantings. On the left you pass a double-aisled stand of mature western hemlocks that create a cathedral-like atmosphere beneath. Reaching Cedar Hut, notice the fine yellow tree paeonies that flank its entrance, beside a thriving Chusan palm that was planted here in 1965.

20 ASCENT to the EXIT

Proceed back across the Bridge over the Larachmhor burn and climb the main drive steadily back towards the Garden Gate. As you advance along the open section of the drive, beside the japonica azaleas once more, look right onto elevated ground, and through the encroaching thicket you may glimpse the shell of Holms' incomplete Garden lodge from c.1930.

Please close the gate securely on departure

We sincerely hope you enjoyed your visit and will return again soon.