

# The Howick Arboretum

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The Howick Arboretum finally opened to the public for the first time in May 2006. It is situated just outside the town of Alnwick, and must be one of the most challenging private planting projects undertaken in the past two decades by any person. It is the brain-child of Lord Howick a very good friend of mine, keen gardener and plant collector. Many of the 11,000 trees and shrubs comprising around 800 different species planted throughout the 65 acre arboretum are his personal collections, wild collected from across the globe. I must say that there are also a few of my collections dotted across the site as well.

Planting first began in 1985 and I've been visiting regularly since then observing the arboretum, watching it establish, against the odds of the harsh winds from the North Sea. Planting has been done on a phyto-geographical layout, planting trees in the more favourable habitats within these locations and has now begun to mature into a fantastic window of the temperate tree world.

The arboretum is split into two halves; the west and the east arboretum. Depending on how energetic you are feeling will dictate which well marked route you walk, but if you are a keen plantsman and enjoy seeing well labelled unusual trees set in a natural landscape growing with the plant associations found in their natural habitat, then you'll need lots of time.

The West Arboretum is the smaller part of the arboretum running from the west of the garden along the Howick Burn. A majority of the collection found here are from China with a few from Japan. Birches like the unusual and not often seen, *Betula luminifera*, *B. albosinensis* and *B. utilis* a more common birch, but here there are several collections all displaying their varying red to pink coloured bark. Unusual *Pterocarya* species, the wingnuts like *P. paliurus* and *P. insignis* abound with *Dipteronia sinensis*, one of only two genera in the maple family, all collected from the Dabashan range in N.E. Sichuan, China. This has got to be one of my favourite walks.

In the East Arboretum you'll need plenty of time and stout walking shoes and you're in for a treat of a lifetime if you love trees. Start at the Church Wall and slowly meander west towards the North Sea. On this walk you will find conifers, broad-leaved trees and large shrubs planted in perfect natural locations from the Himalayas, Pakistan, through China, South Korea and Japan.

Gems like the maples *Acer erianthum* and *A. acuminatum*, and the rowans *Sorbus rosea*, *S. tianshanica*, the Indian horse chestnut, *Aesculus indica* and the Chinese tulip tree *Liriodendron chinense* just seem to thrive in this arboretum.

North America is represented with strong, well-established specimens of *Liriodendron tulipifera*, *Thuja plicata* and *Calocedrus decurrens*.

These are just a few to whet the appetite for your first visit and I guarantee that you'll return to see how this young arboretum has developed and more species in another season.

[www.howickhallgardens.org.uk](http://www.howickhallgardens.org.uk)