

The Champion Trees of Nonsuch Park

Jon Whitehead - Nonsuch Voles - June 2025



Since the Nonsuch Voles were formed in 2012, we have had a close involvement with the trees at Nonsuch Park. Our voluntary work has included woodland management, the planting of hundreds of saplings in the woods, tree planting and care in the Formal Garden and help with the planting of the Walnut Grove in 2015.

The magnificent London Plane tree in the Formal Garden is a very large specimen. It was likely to have been planted in the mid 1700's during the landscaping of the Dell, a former chalk pit, when the estate was owned by Thomas Whateley.

Members of the Voles were curious to find out exactly where the tree ranked in size and whether there were any other notable trees in the Park, so we contacted David Alderman, Director of the Tree Register of Great Britain and Ireland to find out.

The Tree Register (www.treeregister.org) is a unique database of over 270,000 of the nation's most notable trees. It records the nation's wonderful tree heritage and documents the definitive list of Champion Trees.

Champion Trees are either the tallest, or those with the largest trunk circumference (girth) of their type. The database contains details of over 80,000 champion trees.

Nonsuch Park had been surveyed several times in the past, but some of the records were over 20 years old, so the Voles invited David Alderman to visit Nonsuch on 22nd May 2025, so that we could show him trees both in the Formal Garden and the surrounding area and update the records.

The Results

Due to time constraints, the area surveyed was confined to the Formal Garden, its immediate vicinity and The Avenue. A more extensive survey might identify further notable trees.

9 Champion Trees were identified and measured in this area the Park, **8 County Champions** (i.e. Surrey) and **1 British Champion**.

Summary (see Appendix for more details):

There are 3 County Champion Trees for their height:

A Double Horse Chestnut, an Indian Bean Tree and a Judas Tree. The last 2 are in the Formal Garden.

There are 3 County Champion Trees for their girth:

A Double Horse Chestnut, a Red Hawthorn and a Weeping Yoshino Cherry. The last 2 are in the Formal Garden.

There are 2 County Champion Trees for both their height and their girth:

An Orange-fruited Whitebeam in Herald Copse and a Pyrenees Pine in the Pinetum.

There is a British Champion tree for girth: the Magnolia Grandiflora nearest to the Bothy in the Formal Garden. It is likely to date from the early 1800's, around the time when the Mansion House was built.

7 further trees were identified as notable specimens, including the London Plane, which probably ranks in the top 100 Plane trees in the Register.

The Register records 1500 London Plane trees. It's not possible to state the exact ranking of the Nonsuch tree, because some trees haven't been measured for 20 years.

More details about all of trees mentioned above can be found below in the Appendix.

Caring for our Champion Trees

The Champion trees and other notable trees were mostly planted by the gardeners or estate managers in the 18th and 19th Century. They enhanced the prestige of the gardens and grounds of "Nonsuch Park House". Their historic importance is significant and a review of their care and protection is recommended.

APPENDIX – The Results in more detail:

County Champion Trees (Height):

1. Double Horse Chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum* "Baumannii")

Height: 25m Location: The Avenue, west end on south side, twisted trunk.

2. Indian Bean Tree (*Catalpa bignonioides*)

Height: 17m Location: West side of Pinetum.

3. Judas Tree (*Cercis siliquastrum*)

Height: 11.4m Location: Formal Garden north side.

County Champion Trees (Girth):

1. Double Horse Chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum* "Baumannii")

Girth: 3.69m Location: The Avenue, west end, north side by a drain cover.

2. Red Hawthorn (*Crataegus laevigata* 'Punicea')

Girth: 0.97m Location: Right of path into the Pinetum from the Rose Arch.

3. Weeping Yoshino Cherry (*Prunus x yedoensis* 'Ivensii')

Girth: 0.96m Location: Formal Garden, Square bed near the west end of the Mansion House.

County Champion Trees (Height & Girth):

1. Orange-fruited Whitebeam (*Karpatisorbus croceocarpa*)

Height: 14.6m Girth: 1.21m Location: Herald Copse, near path.

2. Pyrenees Pine (*Pinus nigra* subsp. *Salzmannii*)

Height: 25m Girth: 3.73m Location: Middle of Pinetum.

British Champion Tree (Girth):

Magnolia Grandiflora Girth: 2.74m Location: Formal Garden, the Magnolia nearest to Bothy.

Other Notable Trees identified by the Tree Register:

2 more large Double Horse Chestnuts (*Aesculus hippocastanum* "Baumannii") on the Avenue.

Red Buckeye (*Aesculus pavia*) in the South East Corner of the Pinetum.

Maidenhair Tree (*Ginkgo Biloba*) at the end west of the Terrace.

Weeping Holly (*Ilex aquifolium* 'Pendula') in the Formal Garden near the wall.

Magnolia Grandiflora in the Formal Garden - opposite the British Champion!

And finally...

London Plane (*Platanus x Hispanica*) in the Dell - a very large specimen at 30.4m in height and 7m in girth.