

144ft Beech In West Sussex Is Tallest Native Tree In The UK



Charlie Cain, National Trust Ranger for the Devil's Dyke looking up at a Beech tree standing 144ft, which has been declared Britain's tallest tree.

A beech tree standing 144 feet (44 metres) high has been declared the tallest native tree in Britain.

The tree, which is thought to be almost 200 years old, stands in Newtimber Woods on the National Trust's Devil's Dyke Estate, in the South Downs landscape.

The discovery of a new record for the tallest native tree title was made by Owen Johnson, the honourable registrar for the Tree Register, a charity which holds records of more than 200,000 exceptional trees in Britain and Ireland.

He was alerted to the possible new champion, one of a clump of trees planted together which has achieved its great height by continued competition to reach the light and being allowed to grow unmanaged for 90 years, by dendrologist Peter Bourne.

Dr Johnson said: "I didn't quite believe Peter when he said the tallest tree in the woods could be 44 metres tall as I know the South Downs so well. When I finally got around to visiting I found my scepticism entirely unjustified.

Measuring Britain's tallest tree, Charlie Cain of the National Trust

"It's amazing how you can go on discovering marvellous trees, almost on your doorstep.

"It's also strange and fascinating that this one beech, which must have very good genes, has managed to grow so much taller than all of its rivals in the same conditions."

The new record is 3ft taller than the previous native tree champion, another beech in Gloucestershire.





Charlie Cain, National Trust ranger for the Devil's Dyke Estate, said: "This breath-taking woodland has been coppiced for a thousand years or more, which is just incredible, and it's wonderful to think that it's home to the tallest wild tree in Britain.

"Now is the perfect time to come and see this champion as the trees are coming into leaf and the woodland spring flowers are showing their heads. Wood anemones, nettle leaf bellflower

and bluebells are opening across Newtimber Woods."

While the Newtimber Woods beech is the tallest native tree in Britain, the Trust said it was not the tallest tree it looks after - that prize goes to a Douglas fir, a species which is not native to the UK, found at Cragside in Northumberland and measuring 200ft.