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Readers may recall that last year, on a perfect June day, a friend and I threatened to shoot ourselves, the cause of this rash decision being the incomparable glory of the handkerchief tree, *Davidia involucrata*, at Nymans, the Countess of Rosse's splendid garden in Sussex.

This year, on an equally beautiful day in May, we came very near to repeating our insane threat, the cause on this occasion being another great garden, Leonardslea, also in Sussex and almost next door to Nymans. Happily the second threat came to no more than the first had done and instead we enjoyed another memorable afternoon, with England at the rich peak of all her beauty.

Leonardslea is very large and wholly the work of one man, Sir Edmund Loder, grandfather of the present owner, no professional designer having had a hand in it. Since the lay-out was begun as far back as 1887 many of the trees—and it is a garden composed almost entirely of shrubs and trees—are now of gigantic size, one tulip tree, *Liriodendron tulipifera*, being no less than 112ft high, a *Cornus controversa* 48ft high and a *Magnolia campbellii* 62ft high. But even these are dwarfed by a giant redwood tree of 125ft.

The soil of Leonardslea being entirely free of lime, it isn't surprising that camellias, azaleas and rhododendron are here in great quantity. On the deep, undulating banks that drop down to a series of small lakes far below the house they rise in almost mountainous piles of pink, scarlet, rose, blue, yellow and white, some of the camellias also producing that enchanting stippled effect in red and white which I myself find to be almost the most attractive feature. One of these camellias is 25ft high and as much across, which is pretty fair going, while another, *Camellia japonica variegata*, has a circumference of 66ft, and was a large tree as far back as 1907. The small lakes are known as Hammer Ponds, being remains of the iron-ore industry of the past, when hammers and furnaces were driven by water power.

Leonardslea also has its handkerchief tree, and a very large one it is, but the sight that brought my friend and me for a second time to the point of self-destruction wasn't the *Davidia* but the great masses of *Pieris*, another lime-hating shrub whose fiery red young growth is almost as brilliant as the bracts of a poinsettia. Second only to the *Pieris* was *Acer Chiso*, a maple whose young spring foliage gives the impression, from some distance away, of being a mass of most delicate pink blossom. It is a shrub I first saw on Lake Maggiore and I have never forgotten it. But even that was perhaps excelled by the exquisitely chaste

From My Garden by H.E. Bates



Gardeners enjoy other people's gardens. But now, with garden gates shut for the winter, we can only remember them and dream of future visits. So H. E. Bates recalls a garden that was glorious in May

The Gardens of Leonardslea

double yellow wallflower, Harpur Crewe, which grows under the walls of the house, but all the sweetness of the world spread out below.

It would be a poor heart that didn't feel prompted to offer up a prayer of thanks for its heritage.

There is one drawback to Leonardslea. It suffers from the restriction of being almost wholly a spring garden, and so is open to the public only on selected days during May, but a visit there is certainly worth planning and waiting for.

Make your first visit next Spring—it lies on the main Horsham-Brighton road and though there isn't a sign-post saying 'This way to Paradise', I have a strong feeling that there ought to be. □□

Readers who enjoy H. E. Bates' articles may like to know that the second volume of his autobiography, *The Blossoming World*, has recently been published by Michael Joseph at £2.50. The first volume, *The Vanishing World*, also published by Michael Joseph at £2.50, dealt with the author's life up to the acceptance of his first novel at the age of 20. His *A Love of Flowers* (Michael Joseph, £2), will also be of interest to gardening enthusiasts.

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beauty of *Cornus controversa*, whose white flowers looked almost like a flock of winging angels against the brilliant blue of the May sky.

It is, however, not only the immense variety of trees and shrubs, or their prodigious massing and size, that make the gardens of Leonardslea so memorable.

A great part of the enchantment of the place lies, to my mind, in the superb natural setting. Surrounding it is the ancient forest of St Leonard and from the terrace in front of the house, whose walls are covered with that delightful rose, the yellow *Banksia*, you look down on a deep wooded valley in which not a brick or tile or trace of man can be seen anywhere.

For as far as the eye can see there is nothing but a vast mass of woodland, glorious in Maytime with its infinite variations of green as oak and beech and chestnut and birch and conifer turn into leaf. It is a situation of such magnificence that it must surely be one of the most superb in the whole of Southern England, if not the country.

Indeed, if you should happen to come across one of those moaners who are always declaring that the English countryside is being wiped out of existence, I suggest you make him sit down on this terrace and drink in not only the sweetness of that lovely old Scotch