

Discover Glen Nant Important Plant Area

A moss-clad walk through Scotland's temperate rainforest

This hilly walk takes you through oak, hazel and birch woodland, home to a rich diversity of miniature plants covering the branches, trees and boulders. It is these lichens, mosses and liverworts that make Scotland's rainforest internationally important.

Where to start

Start from the Glen Nant Forestry and Land Scotland car park, just off the B845 between Taynuilt and Kilchrenan (grid reference NN019272). This is accessed by crossing a small bridge over the River Nant.

Distance

1.6 miles, there and back. Allow 1½ hours.

Walk grade

A strenuous walk along forest road and narrow gravel paths, including footbridges. The trail can be slippery in places, especially in wet weather, so sturdy footwear is essential. This walk includes part of the Forestry and Land Scotland's Ant Trail, which is a 2-mile circular route.

Refreshments

Taynuilt is the nearest village for cafes and restaurants, 3 miles away.

WC

The nearest public lavatories are in the village of Taynuilt.



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Alliance for
Scotland's
Rainforest



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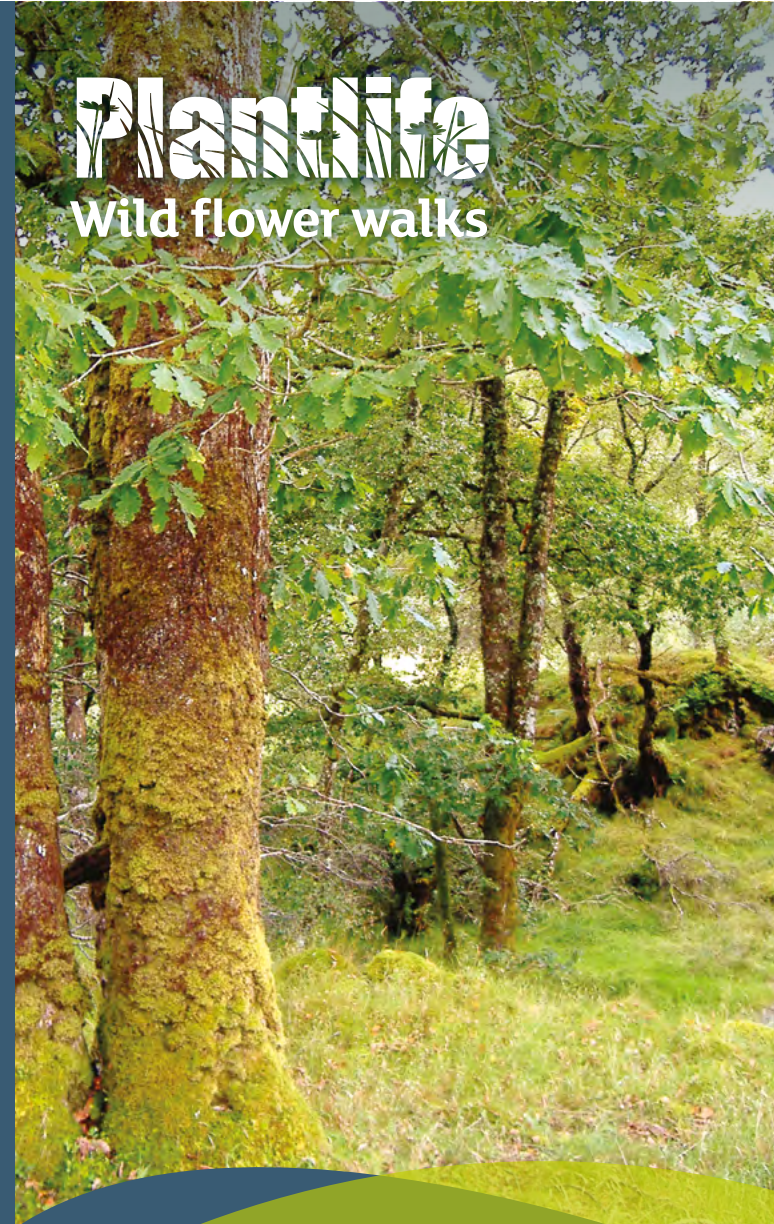
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Plantlife Wild flower walks



The wild plants of Glen Nant

A 1.6 mile walk in Scotland's
Rainforest – part of the West
Coast Important Plant Area



Discover Glen Nant

Important Plant Area

Directions

- 1 Before you leave the car park, take some time to look at the trunks of the mature trees between the car park and the river. Here you'll find a wonderful array of lichens and bryophytes (mosses and liverworts) of all shapes and sizes. Look for the vivid green, leafy **tree lungwort**.
- 2 Head uphill on the gravelled forest road, continuing over the cattle grid. As you go up the track, look for the small **hard fern** in the bank on the left-hand side. Keep on the track as it passes over a stream and bears left uphill. Around here keep a look out for **sessile oak** trees, which are a dominant tree species of Scotland's rainforest.
- 3 Take a right off the forest track at the Ant Trail waymarker, which directs you into the forest and up a small flight of stone steps. The wooded trail heads uphill. Where it initially opens and flattens out, look to the left to see a mossy boulder outcrop with a small oak tree growing out of it. This outcrop is a perfect microhabitat for lichens and bryophytes with mats of the leafy liverwort, **western earwort**.
- 4 Continue to follow the woodland trail uphill, passing great views across to Ben Cruachan. After climbing a little further, you'll then descend into an area of **common hazel** trees, with branches cloaked in mosses and surrounded by wood rush on the ground.
- 5 Carry on the path until you reach the top of a

stone staircase and the side of the hill opens out. Look to your right – just off the path you'll find a birch tree whose trunk is covered with protruding silvery-grey lichen. This is **black-eyed Susan**. Behind this tree is another, whose trunk is covered with one of the characteristic mosses of the Scotland's rainforest – **slender mouse-tail**.

- 6 Continue along the track and look out for **honeysuckle** on the forest floor and winding itself around the branches of trees in the canopy.
- 7 Head down towards the sound of the stream below and out into a flat area of young birch and sphagnum moss, which can be quite boggy under foot. Cross this flat area and continue downhill to the stream. This shady spot is a good place to find **foxglove** flowering in the summer months.
- 8 Once you've crossed over the bridge, stop to look at the first, large, multi-stemmed oak tree on your left. Its trunk is covered with some lovely lichens and bryophytes, including the interesting **cudbear** lichen and some more **black-eyed Susan**.
- 9 Turn left following the Ant Trail waymarker, keeping the stream on your left. You will soon come to a second bridge – this crosses the same stream again. This shady riverside area is great for wood sorrel and **common dog violet** growing on the forest floor, both flowering in spring. You will also find many moss-clad trees covered with **slender mouse-tail**.
- 10 At this point in the trail, you have the choice to either cross the second bridge and continue on the Ant Trail, which eventually returns to the car park via a wide forest road, or retrace your steps to explore more of the rainforest and find any species you missed. As you go, keep a look out for the elusive **ghillie dhu**. He likes to hang out in small nooks and crannies in the roots and trunks of trees, and also among the moss-laden boulders.

Important Plant Areas (IPAs)

Glen Nant forms part of the West Coast IPA, which is internationally important for its lichens and bryophyte communities. This is one of the 47 IPAs in Scotland. IPAs are internationally recognised hotspots for wild plants and lichens. For more information and to discover other IPAs to visit go to www.plantlife.org.uk/scotland



Key



Wild plants. Descriptions overleaf

Walk route

The plants of Glen Nant

This woodland is a classic, temperate rainforest, rich and diverse in plant and fungi species, as well as folklore. It includes:



c. 4 x smaller than actual size

Tree lungwort *Lobaria pulmonaria*

This large leafy lichen, looking like tiny green lungs, is a good indicator of ancient woodland. See if you can find its orange/red fruiting bodies which produce spores.



Common hazel *Corylus avellana*

Our native species of hazel is naturally a multi-stemmed shrub that can reach up to 10 metres in height, although most are between 3-5 metres. Hazel (like oak) supports many species of lichens and bryophytes on a single branch – look closely to see how many different types you can find on one branch.



Foxglove *Digitalis purpurea*

The latin '*Digitalis*' means 'finger-like', so it is not surprising that popular names for foxglove include 'fairy fingers' and 'fairy gloves'. The spots on the petals are for more than just decoration – they actually help guide bees into the flower for pollination.

Hard fern *Blechnum spicant*

This small, leathery fern has two types of leaves or fronds. The fertile fronds stick up straight and are long and narrow with spores on the back of them. The sterile fronds, without spores, arch outwards. The fronds are rigid to the touch, hence the name.



Black-eyed Susan *Bunodophoron melanocarpum*

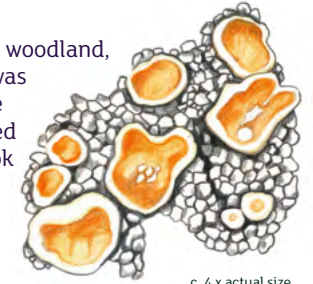
This distinctive, pale grey shrubby lichen is an indicator of ancient woodland. The black 'eyes' of this lichen are actually fruiting bodies, which produce the spores for reproduction. The main body of the lichen has very fine branches, reminiscent of coral.



c. 2 x actual size

Cudbear *Ochrolechia tartarea*

This lichen is an indicator of ancient woodland, but in the 18th and 19th centuries it was also important in the Scottish textile industry, producing a purple-coloured dye. The manufacture of the dye took several weeks to complete, with the lichen being boiled then steeped in lime and urine before being dried and ground into a powder.



c. 4 x actual size



Sessile oak *Quercus petraea*

Many of the oaks at Glen Nant were coppiced in the 18th century to fuel the local Bonawe Furnace during the Industrial Revolution – this is why you may find multi-stemmed oak trees around Glen Nant. Oak is the classic tree of the Scotland's rainforest and supports a rich diversity of species, including bryophytes, lichens, ferns and fungi.



c. 2 x actual size

Slender mouse-tail *Isothecium myosuroides*

This moss is another characteristic species of the Scotland's rainforest, found mainly on tree trunks and boulders, and forming dense mats. On closer inspection, you'll see its tree-like growth form, unbranched near its base and becoming branched nearer the top.



Common dog violet *Viola riviniana*

Historically, the term 'dog' was given to wild flowers that were unscented and this species is no exception. This is the most common and widespread of the violet species, and it flowers from April to June. The ancient Greeks recognised violets as a symbol of fertility and love, and used them in love potions.

Western earwort *Scapania gracilis*

One of the most common bryophytes on the boulder outcrop by the side of the footpath, this liverwort forms compact mats with small, individual rounded heads. It is a true oceanic resident of the Scotland's rainforest preferring wet, humid conditions, and can be found all year round.



c. 4 x actual size

Honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum*

When in flower, this plant is highly perfumed with trumpet-shaped flowers from June to August, and is a great source of nectar for invertebrates. It is a good climber and can be found in the branches of trees.



Ghillie dhu

A forest sprite restricted to the west coast forests of Scotland, which they protect fiercely. Ranging in size from 7 inches upwards, they are well-camouflaged with their clothes of leaves and moss. Look out for them hiding in mossy nooks and crannies! They move around a lot, so we have not been able to pinpoint them on the map.



Illustrations of foxglove, honeysuckle and common dog violet reproduced by permission of Philip's from *Philip's Guide to Wild Flowers of Britain and Northern Europe*, Bob Gibbons and Peter Brough, 2008. Remaining illustrations by Andrew Evans ©Plantlife