

# Shinrin Yoku 森林浴

## at Little Dane Court

### WHAT?

Shinrin Yoku began in Japan 30+ years ago. The words translate as Forest bathing and professor Yamazaki of Chiba University developed the concept. He stated that man's natural environment is, like all the other apes, one of woodlands. But, humans have evolved over the years and created an artificial environment, living in buildings, shopping for food rather than growing it and recently becoming addicted to technology such as TVs, computers and phones.

We live in increasing complex environments and cities. Tokyo with 38 million residents is why Japan was the first place to officially recognise the issues of stress, high blood pressure, depression and poor concentration caused by 21<sup>st</sup> century life.



### WHY?

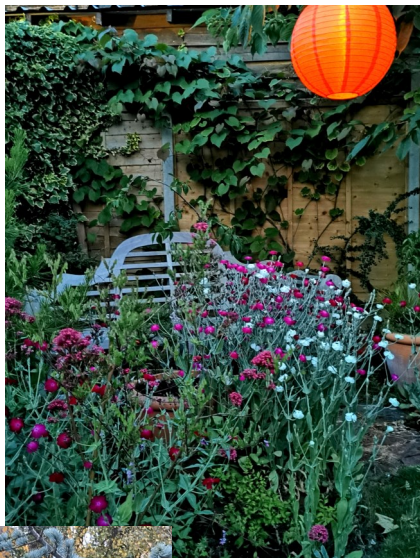
Professor Yamazaki showed how exposure to the natural environment, especially trees and woodland was an effective therapy.

It allows us to reconnect with our natural state of being and calms our overactive brains, so reducing stress and blood pressure and over time also improving our sense of wellbeing.

In Japan, Shinrin Yoku is prescribed by doctors and official areas for forest bathing exist. And now many other countries are recognising its benefits.

People are “unplugging” from the stresses and demands of everyday life by decreasing their mental activity, reducing their overuse of logic and decision making. We are constantly processing information (dealing with others, driving, using phone, tv, pc.) and trying to restore the natural rhythms of life.

This “reset” of your brain to its natural state. reconnects with nature and brings calm, and comfort, resulting in reductions to high blood pressure, stress and heart rate and brings peace of mind.



Seasonal  
images  
from  
Katsura  
garden  
at  
Little  
Dane  
Court





## HOW?

The process of Forest bathing is simple, it can be individual or as part of a group, it has no fixed time, but is not likely to take less than 30 minutes.

First, abandon phones and other distractions, Second, as you enter the trees be silent, walk slowly, try to enter a state of mindfulness. Slow your breathing and focus on the present moment. Quietly contemplate the trees, walk with awareness of each moment and attune to the place, observe the play of sunlight and movement of leaves in the wind. Perhaps closely observe a tree, plant or object and wonder about it.

Stop if you can, sit quietly for a while and just absorb what is happening all around you. Gradually your mind should slow down, your heart rate decrease, and you will bathe in a feeling of calm well-being.



Bedgebury



## WHERE?

Forest bathing needs trees, It doesn't have to be a forest or a wood, even large tree filled garden is enough, but a peaceful atmosphere without the sounds of civilisation is necessary. Little Dane Court in Kent has a Japanese stroll garden filled with maples, snowdrop and ginkgo trees. It is close to several famous gardens and two Forestry Commission public forests; Hempstead and Bedgebury Pinetum. Hempstead is a forest with parking areas with birch, conifers and oak while Bedgebury is a large area of woodland and park with lakes. It is collection of the world's pine trees with many other trees. There are many walks and trails, a small café and riding area.

People can visit woodlands independently or can join a led group to visit either of the forests and learn Shinrin Yoku.

Guests who stay at Little Dane Court B&B can enjoy the Japanese garden with secluded seats and a Zen meditation corner to practice Shinrin Yoku close to home before venturing into the woods.

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