

PGT Trust Funding Award

RHS Level 2 Practical Horticulture

When I was a teenager I had no idea what I wanted to do. My father and grandparents had always grown their own food in their gardens and on an allotment. My father was known for his fantastic roses and as a child I delighted in learning the names of our garden plants.

I loved nature but had never considered a career in Horticulture. Whilst at school I excelled at sport, particularly swimming, which led to a ten-year career in Sport and Leisure, eventually training and supervising my own team of Lifeguards.

In the late nineties, I had an accident and subsequent injury that needed a long spell of rehabilitation and I found myself, in my late twenties facing an uncertain future and a realisation that my career in sport was over.

I took a job in a Publishing company and it was there that my ongoing interest in horticulture was born. I had plants on my desk- Peace Lilies at first- which soon grew into an impressive collection. I began to study books on houseplants and soon realised that I had found a new passion. My desk jungle was so healthy that colleagues eventually started bringing me their own failing houseplants which I would take home and revive. I was dubbed The Plant Hospital. Colleagues said 'my plants didn't look real.'

The first two years of my Horticultural career were spent in a Garden Centre where I was responsible for the Indoor Planter area and assisting in the garden plants area. I continued to read anything and everything to do with plants, which now extended to outdoor plants. I took some casual work as a gardener's assistant and started to learn some basic skills despite not having a garden of my own.

I then became a mother for the first time. Twenty months later my second child followed and my career plans were put on hold as I relocated from the London area to Devon and had to leave my beloved job. With two young children and no family support I struggled to find suitable employment.

Once again it was a life changing experience that guided me back to Horticulture. After the breakdown of my marriage I became the sole provider for my two children and took a part time job in a garden centre. It was like a fire had been lit in my soul again. I decided to consider potential careers and training and made the move to a local wholesale nursery where I could work more flexible hours to fit around school.

The flexibility of my employers and the help of the £715 grant from the PGT has made it possible for me to attain the RHS Level 2 Certificate in Practical Horticulture, which I studied with Bicton College but took the classes at RHS Rosemoor. It was a beautiful setting in which to attend studies, I particularly enjoyed learning to successfully grow some of my own produce- up until I attended the course fruit and vegetable growing had been somewhat of

a grey area and I now feel more confident in my abilities. I will never forget the taste of my own home grown potatoes!



The years of devouring plant books have paid off and I surprised myself with the knowledge I had gained over the years, I believe it made the coursework much easier to follow. I particularly enjoyed the plant idents and began a new obsession photographing plants. I have been encouraged to enter some of my photography into competitions in 2017.

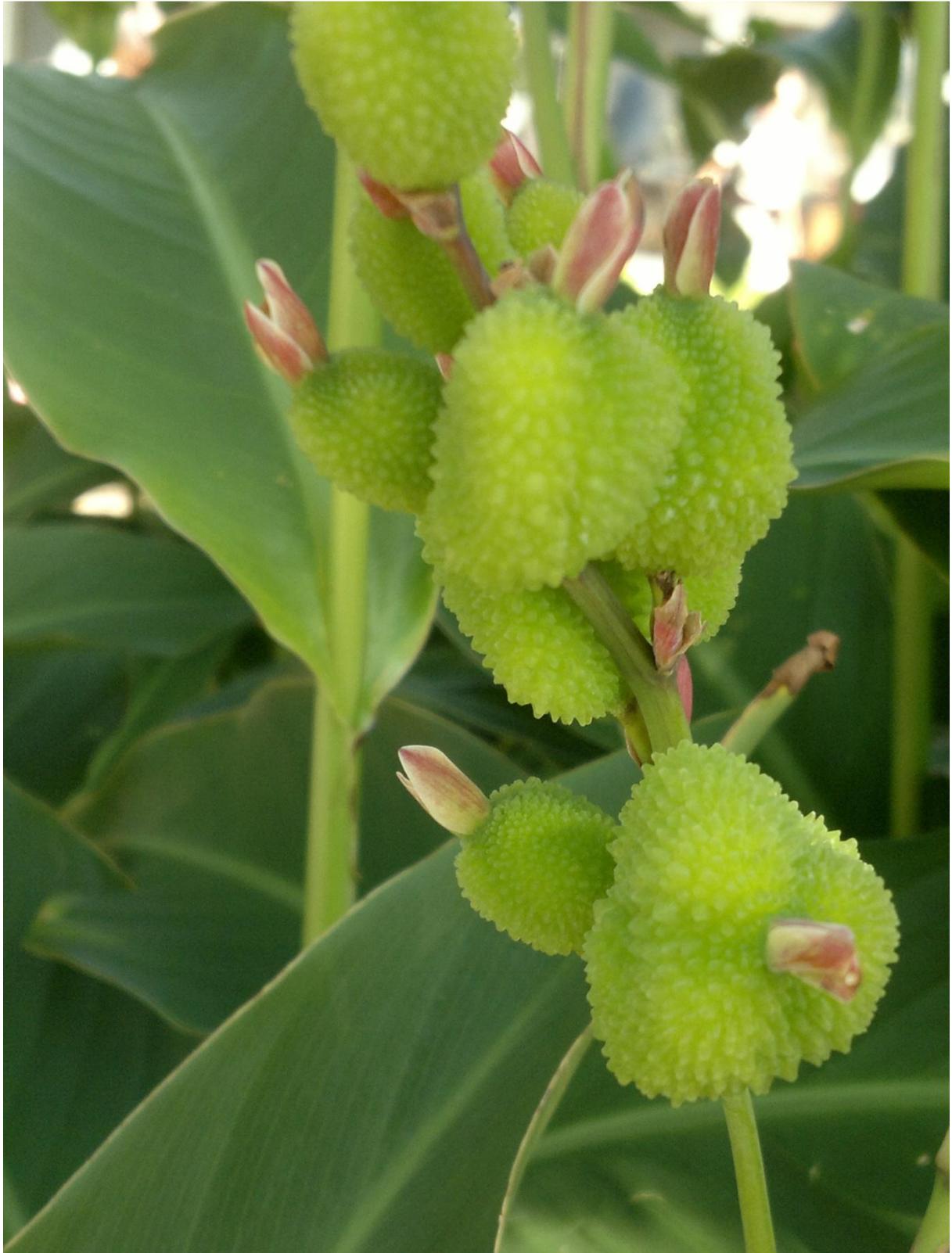
I started the course in September 2015 and completed it in July 2016. I took this course during a myriad of stresses in my personal life and would thoroughly recommend Bicton College as their trainers were particularly helpful and communication was outstanding. It was a major achievement for me! I am now looking forward to studying the theory components via distance learning as it will be less of a financial impact in lost earnings and

enable me to complete an RHS Level 2 Diploma. I will do this by using the remainder of my grant and saving a little each month to make up the difference. I am getting close to my goal now and looking forward to immersing myself in study once again.

The assistance of the PGT award has meant that it has been possible for me to complete studies that I would have been unable to afford. Having this training and attaining the qualification has given me more confidence in my horticultural knowledge as well as embellishing it, which helps me in my current employment.

I hope to have completed the RHS Level 2 Diploma by 2018 and I expect it will open new opportunities for me in Horticulture. I am particularly interested in eventually assessing/teaching or working in horticultural merchandising depending on which fits around the needs of my children. In the meantime, I continue to grow in horticultural confidence and experience and take many, many photographs!





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