

David Wilson

Course - Lantra chainsaw maintenance and crosscutting course

Provider - Vale Training Services Ltd, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire.

Date - October 3rd and 4th 2016

Cost - £265 + VAT

Funding - National Trust £165
Professional Gardeners Trust £165



I began my working career as a studio photographer for catalogues but when the company ceased trading I decided on a career change. I gained the RHS level 2, spray PA1 and PA6 and ride on mower certificates so that I could apply for gardening positions. I was taken on as a Rothschild Student Gardener at a National Trust property in Buckinghamshire where I worked in four teams, woodland, grounds, ornamental and water garden. After completing the training I was taken on as a full time, permanent member of the grounds team.

The post involves grass cutting, pruning, bedding displays, hedge cutting and topiary. Whilst a specialist firm is hired for climbing and technical tree work only one member of the team is qualified to cut down smaller trees and cut up and remove fallen branches. I decided to get the appropriate qualification which would allow me to undertake this work and enrolled on the Lantra chainsaw maintenance and crosscutting course and applied for funding from the National Trust and Professional Gardeners Trust.

The classroom elements of the course included discussions about health and safety which included PPE and safe working practise. I was shown how to dismantle, grease, clean the air filters and spark plugs. I was shown how to maintain the chain guide bar making sure all the surfaces were filed level and how to remove any burrs so the chain ran smoothly. I then checked my chainsaw for worn parts and that the safety mechanisms were working and free from dirt. The instructor then demonstrated how to sharpen the chainsaw which I then did.

The practical work outside involved me demonstrating the safety checks which should be carried out before commencing any work and answering questions about this topic. I was then assessed on my basic compression and tension cuts and assessed for safe working, throttle control and safe working stance. I was then shown two boring cuts which are used in the field when logs are laying on the ground rather than being supported. This is more like the work that I would be doing. I was then assessed on these cuts. Finally I was shown how to relieve extreme tension in branches by using a series of small cuts, and interestingly how to relieve extreme tension in thick bent branches which involved a deep V cut.

This course contained very little reading and no written elements which was ideal for me as I am dyslexic. There were only three other students on the course so there was plenty of individual attention. Having passed the course it will now allow me to participate in chain saw work for the National Trust and ultimately it will enhance my career prospects when seeking future gardening positions.