

Hilary Shedel

Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust (UK) Award

I am a career change gardener, based in Derbyshire, having been a freelance photographer and lecturer for 25 years. After having cancer I took the decision to go into horticulture, an area I have been passionate about for many years.

I have just completed three months working as a private gardener on a ten-acre estate in the Peak District, and prior to that I spent three months working as a Trainee Gardener at Chatsworth House, Derbyshire.

I am keen to gain as much training as possible and, as using tractors is not part of my job description at work, I needed to fund the course myself. I was awarded £400 from the **Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust**, in order to gain a **City & Guilds Level 2 Award in Compact Tractor Driving and Related Operations** qualification. The course and assessment were both held at Chatsworth House in November 2016. The training provider was TKF Training. The total cost of the course was £591.95 Although the cost of this course was significantly higher than others this was a more in depth course and will mean shorter refresher courses in the future, if needed.



Operating the John Deere H180 front-end loader. Picking up gravel in the bucket and depositing it in a trailer

The training was over a four-day period, with both classroom and practical activities.

We started learning about the legislation and regulation that covers using tractors (Health and Safety at work Act 1974, PUWER, noise and vibration, risk assessments and PPE). Although this information can be quite 'dry' to learn it provides the foundation of knowledge before learning the practical skills. Tractors and trailers can be dangerous to the user and the public and it's vital to understand the legislation and regulations that protect those using it and coming into contact with it as well as the practical elements.

Each morning we did safety and pre-start checks on the vehicles. It took a while to acclimatize to the different controls of each vehicle as each was different. During the training we used: a New

Holland TC27DA and trailer, a Fiat DT s 50-66 and trailer and a John Deere H180 front end loader. Initially we trained in private areas at Chatsworth but then did drive out to the main park and carried on our training there. It was good practice as the Christmas Fair was in full swing and it meant we had lots of obstacles to drive around!

Apart from learning how to drive the tractors we learnt how to hitch up a trailer and connect the hydraulic couplings, how to tip a trailer and how to use the PTO (Power take off).

We were tested on the theory and legislation in sections over the four-day period and then on the last day we had our individual driving test. We all passed!



Reversing the New Holland TC27DA and trailer round various trees and obstacles

Retraining for a new career needs both a financial and time investment and I'm very appreciative of the **Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust** in supporting me financially to gain this qualification.

I know that this extra qualification will be a great addition to my CV and ultimately help me get the dream horticultural job I've been looking for.

The **Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust** is an invaluable source of funding to help support gardeners who have recently made a career change into horticulture. I will certainly be recommending the Professional Gardeners' Trust in the future to those in need to help source funding.

Thanks also to Helen Seal, Awards Manager, Professional Gardeners' Trust, who made the application process a smooth one.

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