

My name is Paul Smyth. I currently work in Crug Farm Plants in North Wales. My role here is as the gardener and fieldworker, which means I look after approximately 3ha of both ornamental and production growing areas, which cover a vast variety of conditions. Crug Farm has a unique collection of plants largely collected from expeditions to Asia and the Americas meaning these plants all have very different requirements, making for a unique and different working environment for a gardener. My work covers everything expected of a gardener from pruning to weeding and keeping the gardens to a standard when they are open for the summer months.

Before working for Crug I worked in a nursery that has unfortunately since closed down that was called Evolution Plants. It was based in Bath and grew a similarly unique collection of plants. My role in that nursery was to organise, catalogue and propagate the entire Snowdrop collection. My job here came about from my previous working in Bellefield house and gardens in the midlands of Ireland. Where I worked under the guidance of Angela Jupe as a student.

I was born and reared in Ireland and completed all of my formal education there. My Horticulture training included a BSc (Ord) in Horticulture and a BSc (Hons) in Land Management (Horticulture) These were completed over 4 years in Waterford Institute of Technology, with practical training taking place in Kildalton Agricultural College.

I was awarded a Lironi award which was for £640 towards the CS30/31, the basic chainsaw maintenance, cross-cutting and felling techniques course, at Glynllifon Agricultural College starting on September 26th 2016 and taking five days. The course training and certification is provided by Lanta. The course cost £850.

The training was broken into three distinct units. Day one saw us learn everything we needed to know about chainsaw maintenance and how the machine works. It was fascinating to see a chainsaw in its bare state and personally it made it much clearer for me as to why maintenance is so critical for these machines. It also taught me a great respect for the machine and what it does. Maintenance is something that we as horticulturalists overlook, usually as we don't find the time to do it, but when you understand what happened if it's not undertaken it becomes a much more important task. The maintenance was also useful refresher for general maintenance of two stroke garden machinery. We were required to take apart the various components ourselves and this hands on approach was a great way to learn how to carry out the task. Another key point of the first day was explaining in detail and showing us all the safety features of a chainsaw

The next section we focused on was cross cutting timber. We were taken to stacks of timber and given instruction about how to start and safely use the chainsaw. The key safety feature being the brake, which by the end of the week we were all using automatically. Here we learnt to safely cross cut timber, a skill which we would need after felling trees in the wood.

The remainder of the training consisted of learning all of the felling cuts and putting them into practice on some trees in wood land that needed thinning. We learnt what different cuts were needed for various scenarios we may find in our course of our work. The emphasis was very much on safety and quality of the cuts. We learnt how to deal with trees that wouldn't fall and all the other possible situations we may find ourselves in. The course did however feel as if the emphasis was on those in the forestry industry, as we were clear felling and could simply make room where we wanted. In a work situation we are often constrained by what trees and other plants need saving. I had never felled trees before this training so it was very new to me, but after some careful instruction I began to get confident and comfortable with what needed to be done to carry out the job safely. When

applying for my grant there were issues raised about the safety aspects surrounding chainsaw use. This course has highlighted them to me and I will most definitely not be attempting it on my own. There was a close incident where one of the other participants on the course lost control of his chainsaw and it nicked his safety trousers. That was an eye opener to us all and a reminder of just how powerful the machines we were using are.

To date I have not had much opportunity to put what I practised in my training to use. Partially due to all the catching up after the course and partially that other jobs have taken priority since. Work is now considering investing in a handheld chainsaw. Currently we only have chainsaw on an extendable pole for removing overhanging or dangerous branches. This skill however will be hugely useful to me as I progress in my horticultural career. It has shown me to respect the chainsaw and also how to correctly use it. It is a useful skill that will be beneficial to me in future employment as well as one I can continue to practice in work currently and on the family farm back in Ireland, where I first came into contact with chainsaws. I will also insist that my father invest fully in the correct safety equipment for the chainsaw after seeing the potential damage it can cause and how effective the safety gear is.

The training was delivered very much in a practical manner, which I find very useful and personally gained a lot from. The instructor was helpful, knowledgeable and realistic about what he expected from us. As was the adjudicator. Overall the training was an enjoyable and worthwhile experience. I passed my test first time and now am confident (while also being highly respectful) of chainsaw usage in work.