

## Professional Gardeners Trust Award Report



**Name:** Hannah Bird

**Age:** 25

**Studying:** RHS Level 2 Diploma in the Principles and Practices of Horticulture.

**At:** Reaseheath College, Nantwich, Cheshire

My name is Hannah Bird and I live and work in Cheshire. I created my own gardening and maintenance business in the summer of 2016 and it has been the best decision I have ever made. Since setting up 'The Cheshire Lady Gardener' it has grown from strength to strength. I very quickly realised that there was a need for a gardener that could do more than hard landscaping and had a good knowledge of plants and garden maintenance. The added bonus of being a female enabled me to very quickly set up a good client base, primarily elderly and single women, as I take a more delicate and friendly approach to gardening than most garden maintenance companies.

My career in horticulture is very much still in its juvenile stages. I have always had a passion for gardening and I love the fact I am now making this my career. I was originally a graphic designer and worked in large agencies in Manchester and the surrounding area. However, due to the workload, commitments and commute I started to struggle and as a result suffered from severe depression and anxiety at the end of 2015/start of 2016. After many mind maps I decided to take the plunge and make my passion (gardening) my new career.

To expand my knowledge I decided to study a qualification in horticulture. After a lot of research I decided to study the Royal Horticultural Society level 2 practical and theory. I was lucky that my local land based college; Reaseheath provided this course and has amazing tutors and previous alumni. I started studying my practical and theory modules alongside each other in September 2016, which means by the end of June 2017 I will have achieved my RHS Level 2 Diploma in the Principles and Practices of Horticulture.

I was very fortunate to receive an award from the Professional Gardeners Trust to aid me in my studies and give me the financial support I needed to continue my course. The funding I received very kindly came from The Royal Botanic Gardens of

Manchester and the Northern Counties Trust for the training of northern gardeners. The award covered the December and January instalments of my course, which totalled £401.42. This helped hugely towards paying my course fees of £1405.00.

Studying the practical and theory all at once (although expensive) has been great because there is a lot of cross over between the two. There are a lot of elements that are taught in theory such as sowing fine, medium and large seed but you don't get the chance to do it yourself. However this is an outcome in practical so it was great to put the knowledge learned in theory to use. I also found the plant idents in practical really useful within the theory exams when examples of plants were needed for different sites. Studying the two together has enabled me to get a really wide range of knowledge within a short space of time. I found plant health really interesting as it was something I had never really touched on before and I now regularly go out and about pointing out pests and diseases (much to the annoyance of my other half!). I am also really intrigued by the Latin plant names, this was something I originally dreaded being dyslexia but I actually love it. Its great how a name can tell you different things and learning plants you never knew were related!

The training I have received from Reaseheath College has been brilliant. My tutor Ann Harrison is amazing and not only teaches the course in a way that is easily absorbed but also has a vast pool of knowledge that she willing to share with her students. The course content is in line with the RHS syllabus but is always backed up with practical experiences. This enables everyone to discuss their own experiences and gives the opportunity to learn from each other. It was great that the lessons were taught on campus, I learn better in these situations. The support from teachers and fellow students is invaluable and you can't beat hands on experience.

I have really enjoyed my time at Reaseheath and feel I have learnt a vast amount in such a short space of time. My knowledge and enthusiasm has grown and feel I am a better gardener for it. This in turn has helped me with my business. I am now looking at other options within horticulture. I have decided to combine my love of plants with my design flare and move on to study a diploma in garden design. For as long as I can remember I have wanted to design a show garden at Chelsea and I now feel I am one step closer to achieving my dream.

Thank you again to the Professional Gardeners Trust and The Royal Botanic Gardens of Manchester and the Northern Counties Trust for helping me take this new step. Onwards and upwards from here, watch this space!