

## **Stephen Parkes, spraying course, PG Trust report**

My name is Stephen Parkes, I currently work as a gardener at Gravetye Manor in Sussex. I took this role in 2011, after working for nearly three years as a gardener at Ardingly College, also in Sussex. Prior to this, I was a self-employed ceramicist.

As part of its Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust Fund, the PG Trust offered to pay £480 towards the total £626.50 cost of the PA1 and PA6 spraying course, which I completed at Plumpton College in Sussex in March 2017.

The training consisted of both theory and practical elements. For the theory side of the course (PA1), the learning was all classroom based, taking place over one day. This involved learning about legislation and regulations regarding chemicals, practical applications, the relevant organisations and health and safety. It was useful for me to learn about the responsibility for handling and storing and disposing of potentially harmful chemicals. I also learnt to understand labels and warning symbols.

On the practical side, the training focused on reducing the risk of contamination of the environment, the public and myself, as well as practical training on using the equipment. This element was the most rewarding for me as a student, especially the calibration of the chemicals to produce an accurate mix and learning about the spraying technique. I went into the course not confident about my ability to calculate volumes accurately, but as the training progressed I found I was more than capable of following the formulas and producing the correct mix.

Generally, the trainer was clear in his explanations and willing to answer questions. He was also happy to revisit topics that the class found confusing or wanted refreshing on. He also gave clear instructions on how to approach the exam, which I found very helpful.

However, I did feel that my needs as a dyslexic student were not met. I asked the assessors for some additional learning support, but my request was denied. Ultimately, it was not a problem as I passed the exam, but it caused a lot of anxiety.

In general, the certificates will be essential for me to carry out new spraying duties in my current job in a responsible and legal manner, as well as making me more eligible for future employment. A recent job search showed that most employers now require the PA1 and PA6 qualification, so these certificates will be essential for me to realise my ambition to become a head gardener.