

Report for PGTrust for Knapsack Spraying

In September 2016, I was awarded a paid position on the MacRobert Trust estate in Aberdeenshire as a trainee gardener. Building my career in horticulture, it has become essential that I equip myself with the skills needed to fulfil my role within working gardens and to become a strong member of the horticultural community. With large gardens and land to maintain, spraying pesticides with a knapsack is an important role to perform. Having the certificate would also help me find a job when my contract will come to an end in 2018. Therefore, when my employers offered to fund £220 of my training for PA1 (safe use of pesticides) and PA6 (use of knapsack sprayer), I needed to apply for funding with the PGTrust, due to my modest traineeship's wage. The total price of two days training and examinations was £445, with the Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust awarding me £220.

On Monday 20th March 2017, I attended a full day's training with Lantra of my PA1 – safe use of pesticide training. The aim of the day was to go through the trainings work book and equip those attending with the information to pass the multiple choice exam the following week. The day was fairly straight forward, where we went through the safety and responsibilities you have as an operator using pesticides. I found the information on the protocols of using hazardous materials the most useful. In addition it was interesting to know what to do to prevent exposures and how to protect the environment.

On Wednesday 22nd March 2017 the Lantra trainer came to my place of work as four of my colleagues were also doing the course and we did PA6 – Knapsack use training. With this training I found it really useful as it went over the practical use of a knapsack sprayer, correct personal protective equipment and how to correctly calibrate your equipment. With a lot of maths, we were shown how to fill your knapsack with the exact amount of pesticide you would need for an area.

In the afternoon, the training became more outdoor based and we practice calibrating, checking equipment, safely filling up the sprayer and using it.

On Monday 27th March 2017 it was examination day, with a Lantra assessor coming to the estate. In the morning I took the multiple choice exam for the PA1. I passed with 94%, only getting two questions wrong. After this I could carry on with my PA6 assessment in the afternoon. To pass you needed to understand how the sprayer works and calibrate a simulated spray area correctly. This I did and now I am able to use knapsack sprayers in my workplace.

Thanks to the funding I was awarded, I can progress in my career and professional development, ready to use my new skills this summer.

By Helen Watts in Aberdeenshire