

## Report for the PG Trust

My name is Nathan Foulds. I live and work in Macclesfield, Cheshire. I work in the amenity horticulture sector providing services to the general public such as garden maintenance, hard landscaping, lawn care and specialised pruning.

The total amount of funding I received was £300.00 and was awarded by the Manchester Royal Botanic academy.

The training that I undertook was the RHS Level 2 practical certificate which along with my level 2 theory certificate completes my full RHS level 2 diploma. The training took place at Reaseheath College and was an ongoing assessment over a period of 9 months running from September 2016 until June 2017.

The training involved a number of ongoing assessments and plant identifications which took place in a classroom environment and outdoors onsite. This involved me attending college 1 day a week. During the course we assessed on an array of areas of horticultural practices such as propagation techniques, seed sowing techniques such as broadcasting grass seed, taking various types of cuttings eg ( root, leaf, semi ripe, internode), double digging, pruning deciduous shrubs and planting spring and summer bedding schemes.

We were also assessed on the management of a small scale allotment. Each student had a 3x2m allotment space to grow 5 first early vegetable crops on. The course is designed to accompany knowledge gained on the level 2 theory and strengthen this knowledge through practical experience. I found it to be very interesting and enjoyed participating in each practical. It gave me the opportunity to run and manage a small veg plot over the first few months of the growing season producing crops such as pak choi and beetroot which I had not grown before. We also grew first early potatoes; each student grew a different variety which was then entered into a competition held at the college where prizes could be won for 1<sup>st</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place and best in show. This gave us an opportunity to have some fun as well as venture into another area of horticulture, vegetable showing.

I really enjoyed the way the course was structure and delivered by our tutor Anne. One week we would sit a plant identification test the following we were given the examples to take home and learn. The remainder of the time we spent completing various practical assessments. This ensured each lesson was intriguing and enjoyable. Lessons being based in and out of the classroom regularly meant we were able to get varied use of the campus facilities and see many parts off the college and the plant collections they have. We were also given the opportunity to visit an apple orchard offsite and prune the apple and pear trees which was very exciting.

Overall the course has made me a far better experienced gardener practically and I am now able to perform tasks I was able to do previously with more confidence and professionalism. It has built upon knowledge I already had but also taught me valuable new skills which will benefit my career in the future. I was given the opportunity this year to tap into this knowledge by entering the Young Horticulturalist of the year awards where I came 1<sup>st</sup> in the North west and North wales regional final and went on to compete in the grand finale at Shrewsbury university where I came 6<sup>th</sup> in the

country. This was an amazing experience and has opened many doors for me. It has also given me the opportunity to meet with a lot more like minded people and learn from them. I recently attended the South port flower show where I manned a stall representing the Chartered institute of Horticulture offering gardening advice to the general public. This year has seen me progress in ways I could never imagine in the industry and I hope to continue on this path. I have recently started my RHS Level 3 Practical at Reaseheath and plan to continue to progress further in the horticulture industry. It has also seen me set up my landscaping business in my home town which is now running quite successfully due to the coverage gained from my participation in the competition and the fact that I have gained my level 2 diploma and am able to produce credentials to support the knowledge and experience I have. This wouldn't of been possible for me without the financial support from the award.