

PA1 and PA6 Spraying course, funding report (Philip Vaughan-Williams)



My Name is Philip Vaughan-Williams, I was born in and have lived all of my life in Suffolk, a county which I have a profound love for. Having graduated in the arts and moved into teaching, three years ago I decided that I wanted to change my career direction, to explore my other life long passion, plants!

Having completed RHS Level 2, I was fortunate to find a job that combined my newly qualified knowledge with my experience of supporting disabled adults. Working at Beyond the Wall (Thornham Walled Garden in Mid Suffolk) has afforded me the experience of supporting disabled adults to restore a victorian walled garden.

With weeds being a particular issue, I made a funding application to complete two course days that would allow me to tackle weeding effectively and independently. I currently have had to rely on a colleague to complete this task. I was fortunate enough to receive an NGS award of £500 from the Professional Gardeners Trust,

which paid the £500 cost of PA1 safe use of pesticides and PA6 handheld knapsack sprayer at Easton and Otley College in November 2017. I completed the PA6 examination on the 6th December and have now passed both courses.

The training spanned two days at college, which included an online test for the PA1 course. With this passed I was able to complete the training for the PA6 and then arrange for the spraying examination to take place at my place of work, which given that my examiner was able to see my working environment, provided the opportunity to draw on some of his experience with questions that had arisen in relation to where I work since the course days. With examinations successfully completed, I am delighted to be in the position of being able to complete spraying tasks myself as they might be needed, rather than relying on when a colleague is at the workplace and available to spray. I am also excited that this opportunity will assist me in building my CV with concrete learning experiences and qualifications that support the practical experience that I am gaining through my current employment. I am optimistic with what I have achieved through the last year of working on a horticulture setting, that I have the grounding to progress within horticulture as my chosen career, and am excited that my aim of becoming a head gardener is becoming more possibility than a dream.

I have interest in legislation, how it improves working environments and quality of life, with the PA1 course there was plenty to get my teeth into. Legislation can at times be difficult to understand in terms of day to day operation, but with how the information was presented it was clear to see how legislation has been put in place to protect people, animals and the wider environment. It was during looking at legislation that I was able to start a thought process as to how I could reduce the need for pesticide spraying within my current workplace by using alternative controls and methods.

With understanding in more depth how different pesticides work, and can resinate and build up in the wider environment, I have started to look at how chemicals are more last resort than an easy solution to problems with pests and weeds. With working in a garden set in woodland, I am keen that the way I garden does not have a negative impact on the surrounding area, or indeed the wider environment. I am looking at enhancing a number of current practices that will reduce the need for spraying, and adopting one or two new practices that I hope will reduce the need to rely on spraying as solution, however I am under no illusion that alternatives to spraying will always have 100% effect, but am interested to speak to other professionals to investigate the availability of pesticide products that are effective yet more sensitive to the environment, after all why would I want to damage the environment within the county that I live and love so very much?

Philip vaughan-Williams
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