

My Report for the Professional Gardeners Trust

By Tamar Kendall

I am a gardener for the National Trust at Trengwainton in Cornwall. I have a keen interest in ethnobotany as I undertook a foundation degree in global plant use which covered ethnobotany in several modules. I wanted to gain knowledge and inspiration for an apothecary project that may be in the pipeline for the future at Trengwainton.

I decided to apply to Chelsea Physic Garden for a week of secondment; they said it was fine for me to come along. I then applied to the Scott Finnis fund to help cover travel and accommodation costs. I never expected to be awarded more than £100 but I was awarded £475, which made the whole experience much more enjoyable as it took a lot of pressure off me financially. In total I paid £416 for accommodation, £110 for my train plus about £35 on taxis and tubes. I was going to finance it all myself so I was very thankful for the extra help.

I spent the first week of April working at Chelsea Physic Garden. It was a very inspiring visit and I definitely learnt a lot. The garden had a massive delivery of rotted manure which we spend a fair bit of time spreading around the garden. I also spent lots of time in various glasshouses, including an Atlantic glasshouse, a tropical corridor and a Pelargonium glasshouse. I was very familiar with the Atlantic glasshouse as this has always been an area of interest for me, but it was amazing seeing so many new species of Echim, which are some of my favourite plants. I also really loved being in the tropical corridor as I am also very passionate about spices and seeing many of them made me very happy. Whilst I was in the glasshouse my duties were to water, pick off any pests and remove dead foliage. I also did lots of weeding and removing of unwanted plants around the gardens. I had a study day where I could study the plants and went on a behind the scenes guided tour with deputy head gardener Nell.

On the whole I learnt lots about taxonomy, ethnobotany and biogeography. I found observing the dynamics and practises there very inspiring, for instance the hygiene and accuracy of everything done there is definitely to a much higher standard than where I work. I have brought this back with me and intend to encourage better practise within our workplace. It has definitely left me with a craving for more knowledge and science in my life. It showed me what I don't know as well as reinforcing what I do know, so now I am studying up on my taxonomy and brushing up on my botany. I have already started to grow many medicinal plants since I have been at Chelsea and am working towards creating an apothecary of my own one day.

Email PS The apothecary garden is still in the pipe line, I have just finished my herb display and that is all looking lovely. I did spend lots of time with medicinal plants