

Professional Gardeners Trust Training Course Report

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Courses - City & Guilds NPTC Level 2 Award in CS30 Chainsaw Maintenance and Cross Cutting
- City & Guilds NPTC Level 2 Award in CS31 Felling and Processing Trees up to 380mm

Provider - Bicton College, East Budleigh, Devon

Dates - 8-10th May & 9-12th July 2018

Cost - £942

Funding - £942 from The Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust (UK) Award administered by the PGTrust.

I am currently working at a National Trust garden in Devon near Exeter as a Historic and Botanical Trainee Programme (HBGTP) trainee which is a two year placement that commenced in September 2017. Through this scheme I benefit from professional horticultural training whilst I work, and I also study for the RHS Level 3 Diploma. My duties include weeding, watering, pruning, propagation, hedge cutting, lawn care including scarification and mowing with pedestrian and ride on machines, leaf blowing and collection, hay cutting and bailing, herbaceous planting and shrub care, path management, and tree work. Before gaining a place on the scheme, I worked and volunteered for the National Trust part time alongside private gardening jobs.

The first course that I went on was the CS30 Chainsaw Cross Cutting & Maintenance course which was mainly workshop based and involved looking at the chainsaws in depth in terms of health & safety and maintenance of the saw. We started by going through the safety features of a chainsaw and learning how to dismantle, clean and maintain all of the different parts of the saw as well as looking for potential problems and how to deal with them in terms of safe operation of the chainsaw. I had previously covered many of these points during seasonal servicing of the chainsaws at work so to go over it again with extra information really reinforced my knowledge, built up my confidence, and allowed me to relax a little more and enjoy the course.



The second aspect of the course focussed on health and safety when out using the saw and crosscutting techniques. This involved going through and demonstrating pre-start safety checks of the saw, cold and warm starts, site safety and risk assessments, tension and compression cutting, cross cutting including bore cuts, moving and stacking processed timber, and safely dealing with a trapped saw. This section packed quite a lot of things into one day so it felt quite intense but luckily I had experienced a number of aspects of it before. Being out using a saw again was great and I felt confident going into the assessment the next day although it was rather a hot day in all the PPE! Our trainer Tim Stevenson was very knowledgeable, patient and delivered the course well and focussed on each individuals needs really well.

The second course was the CS31 Felling & Processing Trees up to 380mm which was all practical work carried out in a conifer plantation a few miles away from the College. On the first day we started by looking at site safety and risk assessments, health & safety for chainsaw use and PPE, legal and environmental considerations, and safe brashing techniques in preparation for felling. The second day saw us looking at safe felling techniques which included inspection of the tree to be felled, choice of felling direction, step cuts on smaller diameter trees, dealing with small diameter hung up trees, moving trees with appropriate aids, snedding (removing branches), cross cutting and stacking. We also looked at sink cuts, standard felling cut and height with correct hinge width, aid tools and escape routes. This was quite a tough day as it was very physical work, the weather was rather warm with it being the hottest recorded July for a number of years, plus it was sweltering due to wearing all the appropriate PPE. The third day saw more practice of the topics covered on day two plus dealing with hung up trees up to 380mm diameter, using hand tools to facilitate take down, using a winch to aid take down, and felling a tree that is slightly weighted **against** felling direction and selecting appropriate felling cuts (plus the same for weighted **in** the felling direction). This was somewhat tricky to master as the cuts were on small diameter trees and needed a high level of accuracy to enable them to be successful, controlled and safe. I spent most of the fourth day mastering these cuts and undertook the assessment near the end of the day which went really well thanks to Ian the assessor who was brilliant and put us at ease. A large proportion of this course was relatively new to me but again Tim did really well at delivering the training and ensuring everyone was of a competent standard.



Safe corner cut/Danish pie cut

I now feel much more confident and knowledgeable (and qualified!) to undertake work of this type in my current position and in more senior horticultural roles in the future. These courses have helped me develop my growing skill-set and helped to make me a more desirable candidate when applying for future work. In the future I may look to undertake the CS32 Fell and Process Trees Over 380mm course, if and when I need it, as our trainer claimed that the techniques used are virtually the same as CS31 course, just on larger trees which may be of use in more mature/historically planted gardens.

I am extremely grateful to The Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust (UK) and the Professional Gardeners Trust for their generous support, thank you.

