

## Professional Gardeners Trust Funding Report – Beccy Middleton

I am currently working at St Andrews Botanic Garden, Fife, as Systematics and Display Collections Section Supervisor, and have been there for two and a half years. The horticulturists at St Andrews work in small teams to look after the four different parts of the garden, although we sometimes work together to complete bigger tasks. There is just one other permanent member of staff in my team, but sometimes we have help from volunteers or interns. Although I have been working in horticulture for over ten years, this is the first role I have had in which I supervise or lead other members of staff, and I really want to make sure that I am competent in this area of my job.

Last year, I was very lucky to be able to complete the Institute of Leadership and Management's Award in Leadership and Management (level 3), via distance learning with the Academy of Leadership and Management. This was provided by my employer and I found it very useful. It consisted of two modules, completed over two months, called 'Understanding Leadership' and 'Solving Problems and Making Decisions'. I was keen to continue my studies and complete a further four modules to attain the more advanced Certificate in Leadership and Management. However the cost of the Certificate was substantial and could not be covered by my employer.

I am very therefore extremely grateful to have received £400 from Perennial's Lironi Training fund, via the Professional Gardeners Trust, to help towards the cost of this further training in people management. This amount was 50% of the cost of my chosen course. This is a significant amount, and really made it feasible for me to undertake this study.

I started this further qualification in December 2018. It was also delivered through distance learning which allowed me to study at home in the evenings and at weekends. The timetable was quite flexible which was great, as it meant that I could fit the study around other commitments. My timetable allowed around one month for each module, but the last two modules took me a bit longer than this, and I completed the course in June 2019.

The four modules were all very interesting and relevant to my work in different ways.

The first was called 'Understand how to Establish an Effective Team'. It examined the characteristics of an effective team and explained why teams can be so effective. It then explained how to put this knowledge into practice, including building trust and establishing good working relationships. Although the team I work in is small, much of the information in this module was extremely useful and I have been able to put much of it into practice already.

The second was called 'Motivating for Performance', which covered the theoretical aspects of motivating others, and how to apply this in the workplace. This module was very interesting, and aside from understanding what motivates other, it was also useful in that it helped me to recognise what motivates me.

The third was called 'Planning and Allocating Work', and it covered different methods you can use for organising your work and that of the team. The assignment required me to set objectives for the team, and prepare detailed action plans to show how we would meet these. This was a challenging assignment, but probably the most useful one for my current job because it will help me to structure our work and make sure we meet our targets.

The fourth and final assignment was called 'Management Communication'. While some aspects of this module were perhaps more relevant to people working in larger organisations, and to those based in offices, there was plenty of useful information here which I can use in my day-to-day work, and will help me to think more clearly about what it is that I am trying to communicate and what the best way to do this is.

I really hope that this course will benefit me, both in my current job and in future roles. I think this knowledge will help me work together with colleagues effectively and harmoniously. I hope to continue working in gardens with other gardeners, and although I am sure that many would consider management dry and irrelevant, I think it is crucial that in horticulture, we can work together effectively and professionally, and make sure that both ourselves and colleagues have satisfying and enjoyable working lives. I already feel that this learning has improved my performance in my current role, and I think it will also make me feel more confident in applying for head gardener level jobs in the future.

I would like to say a huge thank you to both the Professional Gardeners Trust and Perennial for making this training possible with a generous bursary.

