

GARDEN MUSEUM

Job Description Horticultural Traineeship

Background

The world's first museum dedicated to the art, design and history of gardens, the Garden Museum is housed in an ancient church beside the River Thames and next door to Lambeth Palace in central London. In the churchyard – and now the centrepiece of the courtyard garden by Dan Pearson – is the famous tomb of John Tradescant, gardener to King Charles I, and Britain's first celebrated horticultural hero.

The church has been rebuilt and extended to house exhibition galleries for permanent and temporary exhibits; rooms for education and study, an award-winning cafe and an archive of garden design. The Museum also hosts London's busiest programme of garden talks, with over fifty evening events each year, and weekend gatherings including a Spring Plant Fair and Festival of Fairytales.

The museum's gardens are a green oasis in the heart of the city. Spread over its former churchyard site and across the road in our local park, 'Old Paradise Gardens', they include a lush central courtyard designed by Dan Pearson, areas of arid and shade plantings, and a new community garden for local produce growing. Our gardens are diversely planted, freely accessible and facilitate horticultural learning, discussion and community engagement.

The Museum is an independent charity, which receives no income from central or local government. The traineeship has been generously funded by The National Gardens Scheme.

Description of the role

The Garden Museum's Horticultural Traineeship has been designed to give a gardener of particular talent and ambition a chance to explore possibilities for their professional future by placing them at the centre of a busy gardening hub. The particular appeal of this traineeship is in its diversity of experiences, in facilitating introductions to the stars of the gardening world, and involvement in the Museum's engaging public programme. It also includes the rare opportunity to work in many of Britain's finest historic and contemporary designed gardens: past examples have included placements at Lowther Castle, Great Dixter, Gravetye Manor, Beth Chatto Gardens and Aberglasney Gardens in Wales, and 'shadowing' experiences with garden designers such as Tom Stuart Smith, Sarah Price and John Little.

Previous trainees have gone on to roles as independent garden professionals, in parks management, tree surgery and media, and include Matt Collins, our Head Gardener and garden writer for the Guardian and RHS.

The Traineeship will run from October 2025 to early September 2026 (48 weeks)

Reports to: Matt Collins (Head Gardener)

Matt is Head Gardener at the Museum, a garden writer (The Guardian, RHS, Gardener's World, Gardens Illustrated) and author of *The Tree Atlas* and *Forest, Walking Among Trees*. www.mattcollinsgarden.co.uk

Person Specification

Applicants for the Traineeship should have:

- Graduated from a recognised horticultural course
- Gardening experience
- Interest in garden history
- Interest in contemporary gardening issues
- Ability to communicate with professional colleagues, volunteers and members of the public visiting the garden
- Ability to work independently
- Willingness to attend occasional evening and weekend events
- Ability to work with a team of volunteers towards shared objectives
- Due to the nature of the role, lone working is frequent, so the ability to perform demanding physical tasks unassisted is essential

Main duties and responsibilities

The Trainee will work in the Museum gardens except during placements which take place once per month from between a day to a week (see below) and will add up to 18 days per year. Although the site is ancient the gardens are new, and comprised of the following:

The centrepiece is the courtyard garden, designed by Dan Pearson and planted in 2017. It is inspired by the continuing story of plant collecting – and will be added to with introductions by contemporary plant collectors – and as a collaboration with Dow Jones Architects in creating a horticultural oasis within a busy urban neighbourhood.

At the front of the site we have laid out a garden designed by Christopher Bradley-Hole in a contrasting formal style, and conceived as an urban piazza. The Bradley-Hole garden is set within a medieval churchyard, the tombs of which have been preserved; this shadier area of the garden, along with a 'dry' garden at the front of the museum have been planted by Matt Collins, and are developing their own sense of horticultural place.

Across the road in the museum's neighbouring park 'Old Paradise Gardens' we have made a new community garden, designed by Dan Pearson. Made with natural materials including woven hazel fencing, it is set out in the organic shape of a 'seed pod', with raised beds inside (the 'seeds') offered to Lambeth-based families for the growing of produce. The garden provides a restful yet engaging space for the enjoyment of our Lambeth neighbours and museum visitors alike.

Other activities will include:

- Continuing the development of horticultural projects within the museum's public surroundings and the adjacent park 'Old Paradise Gardens', under the exciting 'Lambeth Green' initiative.

- The west side of the extension has been designed as an orangery, which is now used for an evolving eye-catching display of potted indoor plants and cut flowers.

The role includes basic garden maintenance but also encompasses the chance to learn through working in showpiece gardens by major designers and plants-people. It will also develop people skills as responsibilities will include:

- Working with a team of volunteer gardeners and leading this team towards agreed objectives
- Communicating with visitors and Friends of the Museum (for example, by preparing information on the gardens and participating in group tours)
- Supporting horticultural events e.g. the Spring Plant Fair, in which fifteen specialist nurseries exhibit at the Museum to over 1,400 visitors.
- The opportunity for at least one eye-catching personal planting project to show the Trainee's talent and imagination

Placements

The Traineeship has been designed to offer placements, 'shadowings' and introductions, and applicants should be determined to make the most of this opportunity.

The programme will be designed in discussion with the successful applicant and will range from a day in the offices of a horticultural magazine to site visits with designers and head gardeners, and as mentioned, participation in the build of a Chelsea Flower Show garden. These placements are expected to add up to 18 p.a., which are included in the 4 days per week of the role.

As said, the Trainee should make the most of being present at the events programme at the Museum, which draws together many within the horticultural world.

Contract

The traineeship will run for 48 weeks from October 2025 — early September 2026, working part-time: 4 days per week (Including occasional weekend days) and is generously funded by the National Gardens Scheme.

The bursary for the part-time working and duration of the traineeship is £18,615.

Benefits

Benefits for this working pattern include 28 days Holiday (inc of Public Holidays) & Pensions Auto-Enrolment after 3 months. 20% discount in the Museum gift shop and on days when the trainee is working, 25% discount in the Garden Café.

Equal Opportunities

The Garden Museum aims to be an inclusive organisation where everyone is treated with respect and dignity, and where there is equal opportunity for all.

The Garden Museum respects and values diverse characteristics. We are committed to positively engaging and celebrating the differences between our diverse staff and users, to enable us to achieve our aims within the organisation and the external community.

Application

Please send CV and a covering letter explaining why you believe you would be a good candidate for the Traineeship to recruitment@gardenmuseum.org.uk marking the subject box 'HORTICULTURAL TRAINEESHIP', by midnight on **Monday 15th September**.

In addition we require a reference from a recent college tutor or similar mentor.

We regret that we are unable to respond to all applicants and you will only hear from us if we wish to invite you to interview.

Short-listed candidates will be interviewed the **w/c 29th September 2025**.