

Presentation to PlantNetwork Annual Conference
12th October 2016 Helen Seal, Professional Gardeners' Trust

Helen spoke using the PGTrust's website, pgtrust.org.uk and also that of The Professional Gardeners Guild, pgg.org.uk to highlight that they are different organisations.

The Professional Gardeners Trust gives award to gardeners for training that they otherwise would not be able to afford, to benefit their career and the profession as a whole.

The funding comes predominantly from horticultural charities and goes directly to individuals

Using figures from 2015, she said that 70% of the gardener applicants are career changers, 58% women (noting the much lower % of women gardeners across the sector), and 28% in training positions.

She pointed out that applications which fail are from people with hardly any professional gardening experience, or gardeners who are looking for training to enable a move out of horticulture, or for courses which don't match their career aspirations or are full time, which are beyond the scope of the charity to support.

Currently the PGTrust is making awards to gardeners for up to 75% of essential costs of a training to a maximum of £750. Longer courses like the RHS masters can be part-funded by repeat applications for succeeding years. The average award in 2015 was for £410.

The most popular training, 38% of awards in 2015, is RHS courses, modules from levels two and three. An award makes a tremendous difference to a gardener, and their reports demonstrate how they feel it really helps their careers progress. There is a trend for more gardeners to apply for on-line training – which is in fact a very hard way to study for many. The training frequently takes longer than the gardener anticipated.

Next in popularity is training for use of equipment and machinery, 34%, most commonly PA1/6. The trustees question those who apply for chainsaw training very rigourously in order to ensure a high success rate.

Helen pointed out that employers are expected to pay for a training which is listed as essential in the gardener's job description, and to make a contribution, often in paid time, for a training which is classed as desirable.

These courses and others like social and therapeutic horticulture courses are all accredited courses, but the PGTrust is the only charity which reliably provides funding.

The grantsforhorticulturists.org.uk website lists many other award-making organisations, some of which like the Diane Aitchison fund of the Scottish

Rock Garden Society, and the Garden Centre Association make awards for training in areas which one would not expect. Some other funders of training are not included in the list:

www.wfga.org.uk/why-join-us/christine-ladley-fund.

www.hardy-plant.org.uk/hps/bursary.

Few gardeners apply for a work placement in another garden, although awards are available from the PGTrust, (as well as the RHS Bursaries, and the Merlin Trust for gardeners under 35). Helen emphasized how all gardeners who undertook a work placement highly valued the experience and encouraged delegates to promote this form of training.

There are other trainings for which gardeners do not apply, but this can also be because the training is not generally available, though some may be among larger organisations like the National Trust.

1) Specialist Horticultural Training

- botany/ plantscience/plant identification skills for gardeners
- heritage gardening skills like tending glasshouse fruit, vineyard care and orchard pruning. The Senior Gardeners of the PGG can offer bespoke training in such skills.

2) Public interaction and instruction

- how to give talks and presentations
- how to take a tour of a garden
- how to train gardeners/trainees/volunteers in a skill the gardener knows

3) Generic management

- recruitment, appraisal, disciplinary procedures and other HR skills
- managing difficult situations, people and change
- supervising contractors
- use of technology

4) Self-employment skills

- business procedures. Alan Sargeant offers courses on garden management themes, but gardeners have not applied for funding to attend.

Helen then outlined the Trust's pilot scheme of Paying the Trainer. One award of £1700 has been given to date through which 11 gardeners received a three day Lantra certificated tree inspection course. The gardeners paid their £40 Lantra registration, the host garden supplied the training material (trees) and the teaching room, and the PGTrust paid the trainer and an administration fee to the organiser (Surrey Horticultural Training Group). This provided incredible value. A key criteria is that half of the participating gardeners have to be local gardeners, not employed by the host garden. The training should be in a subject for which a good local source of training does not already exist. Helen encouraged conference participants to apply for a Paying the Trainer award.