

Role: Head Gardener – Harmony and Priorwood Gardens	Region / Department: Edinburgh & East
Reports to: Operations Manager: Borders	Pay Band: Grade 3 Upper - £29,957 Per annum
Location: Melrose, TD6 9PX	Type of Contract: Permanent, Full-Time (40 hours Per Week)
Cost centre: 3PRI	Activity code: GAZ

JOB PURPOSE

Step into a unique opportunity to lead and inspire at the heart of the Scottish Borders. As Head Gardener for Harmony Garden and Priorwood Orchard, you won't just manage two of Scotland's horticultural treasures—you'll become their guardian, storyteller, and visionary.

Nestled in the historic town of Melrose, Harmony Garden is a vibrant, living tapestry set against the elegance of one of Scotland's finest Regency houses. With sweeping herbaceous borders, a rare bulb lawn, productive vegetable beds, and a traditional orchard, this is a garden that celebrates both beauty and bounty. Just across the lane, Priorwood Orchard offers its own charm as Scotland's first garden dedicated to the art of flower drying, with over 90 heritage apple varieties and a peaceful woodland glade.

As Head Gardener, you'll lead a passionate team of gardeners and volunteers, shaping a visitor experience that is rooted in horticultural excellence and seasonal wonder. You'll balance traditional gardening craft with modern sustainability, bringing creative flair to planting schemes, restoration projects, and visitor engagement.

You will live the Trust's values of brave, caring, curious, inclusive and vibrant.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- Working with the Operations Manager and Gardens & Designed Landscape Manager to create a vision for the gardens that blends conservation with creativity.
- Leadership that motivates, mentors, and grows both people and plants.
- A deep respect for the heritage of these spaces and a desire to make them thrive in the present.
- Opportunities for learning and discovery—whether that's through workshops, community involvement, or seasonal storytelling in the gardens.
- Collaboration with a wider network of Head Gardeners and conservation experts across the Trust to deliver impact on a regional scale.
- You'll play a key role in events like the Apple Weekend and Borders Book Festival, help tell the gardens' stories through interpretation and social media, and ensure the properties are always presented at their best for visitors, holiday guests, and special functions.
- This is more than a job—it's a chance to shape the future of two remarkable gardens, leaving your mark on landscapes that have inspired for generations.

SKILLS, EXPERIENCE & KNOWLEDGE

Essential

- Sound practical knowledge of Health and Safety processes and procedures and the ability to work effectively within these processes.
- Substantial relevant practical experience in general amenity- and heritage gardening with experience of tool and machinery use and maintenance.
- The ability to remain calm in challenging and unexpected situations.
- Experience of managing a team of staff and/ or volunteers
- Confidence and ability in dealing with a wide range of internal and external stakeholders
- Good organisational and time-management skills – including the ability to prioritise work where necessary.
- Computer literacy with excellent ability of MS software
- Being able to demonstrate our values: caring, inclusive, brave, curious & vibrant.
- Demonstrable propagation skills and experience.

Desirable

- Skills in arboricultural techniques - tree inspection experience.
- Ability to plan, design and execute small-scale replanting projects.
- Experience of developing risk assessments and implementing safe systems of work.
- Experience and certification in use of a tractor mounted boom sprayer PA2 (or willingness to train and use).

QUALIFICATIONS

Essential

- An HND/HNC level qualification in amenity horticulture or related subjects (equivalent to NVQ/SVQ level 3), or higher or equivalent experience.
- Valid UK driving license.

Desirable

- Current First Aid certificate.
- Basic chain-saw certificates CS30 and CS31.
- Ride on mower experience and certification.
- Brush cutter experience and certification.
- Professional tree inspection qualification and advanced CS units.
- PA1 and PA6a spraying certificates.
- Woodchipper experience and certification.

DIMENSIONS AND SCOPE OF JOB

Scale

- Operationally responsible for day to day management of five acres of gardens and designed landscapes.
- Following the completion of the Priorwood boundary wall re-build, the head gardener will have responsibility – in discussion with the Gardens and Designed Landscape Manager – to appropriately replant the area.
- There is an original Moncur and Mackenzie glasshouse which will require conservation planning.
- Will have regular (daily) interaction with members of the public of all ages and abilities; including holding workshops, talks and events.
- Will have frequent interaction with suppliers and contractors, including supervision.
- The duties/responsibilities/accountabilities of the role require you to become a member of the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) scheme, which replaces the 'Enhanced Disclosure' check and is administered by Disclosure Scotland.
- Acting as a first aider for the sites.

People Management

- Line management of three gardeners and a team of dedicated volunteers.
- Working closely with property, cluster and Regional and National colleagues and external supporters, suppliers and stakeholders.
- Working with volunteer groups, e.g. planning Conservation volunteer events and liaising with external corporate and charitable groups.
- Frequent interaction with suppliers and contractors.

Tools/equipment

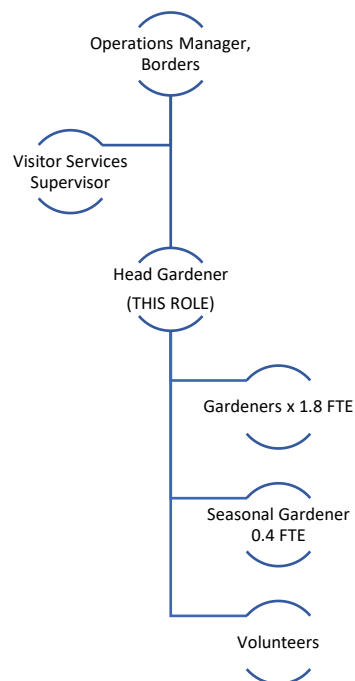
- Will be a frequent user of driven vehicles such as tractors, ride-on mowers (including trailers and other attachments) and road going vehicles.
- Will be a frequent user of powered tools such as stump-grinders, winches, chainsaws, mowers, strimmers, brushcutters, hedge-cutters, etc.
- Will be a frequent user of hand-tools such as spades, forks, trowels, rakes, hoes, shears, and secateurs.
- Will be a frequent user of IT equipment.

Finance Management

- Whilst not a budget holder, has delegated responsibility for the property budget.
- Will be expected to look after tools and equipment in a manner which is considerate to available charitable funds.
- Will be required to manage expenditure within that defined for the gardens and to contribute fully to the development of an appropriate budget and capital expenditure cases.

Additional Responsibilities

- Will be a key holder.
- May be asked to facilitate holiday cottage changeovers on occasion.



The Purpose, Context, Key Responsibilities, and Person Specification reflect the requirements of the job at the time of issue. The Trust reserves the right to amend these with appropriate consultation and/or request the post-holder to undertake any activities that it believes to be reasonable within the broad scope of the job or his/her general abilities.

Applications

Interested applicants should forward their Curriculum Vitae (CV) or an Application Form by email via workforus@nts.org.uk by Sunday 18th May 2025.

Please ensure your CV includes your full name and contact details, the CV file sent to us should be titled your first initial and surname. When submitting your CV please state the position and job location of the vacancy you are applying for in the subject title or body of your email: For example "Head Gardener – Melrose"