

<b>Role:</b> Garden Trainee	<b>Region:</b> South & West
<b>Reports to:</b> Head Gardener, Dumfries & Galloway	<b>Pay Grade:</b> Grade 1, £27,976 pro-rata, per annum. £13.45 per hour.
<b>Location:</b> School of Heritage Gardening, Threave Garden, Castle Douglas, DG7 1RX	<b>Type of Contract:</b> 1-Year Fixed-Term. Full-Time, 40 Hours Per Week.
<b>COST CENTRE:</b> 2207	<b>ACTIVITY CODE:</b> GAZ

## **JOB PURPOSE**

The Garden Trainee role at Threave Garden will provide the post-holders with development in a broad range of work-based practical horticultural skills, over the course of a year spent working as part of the team there, supplemented by written coursework and plant identification tests. Training will be based primarily around the content of the RHS Level 2 *Certificate in Practical Horticulture*, but additional enhancements will also be available. Our aim is to take people who have undertaken a horticultural apprenticeship, an academic horticultural qualification or who have proven practical gardening experience and to develop them further into the rounded skilled, craft professional gardeners that the heritage garden sector, including the National Trust for Scotland, requires.

## **WHAT WE OFFER**

The year at Threave comprises paid day-to-day work in the garden alongside practical training and assessment of skills, knowledge and behaviours. The RHS Level 2 training is supplemented by several assessed written assignments designed to enhance trainee learning. This includes fortnightly plant identification tests (20-25 plants), keeping a daily diary, completing plant profiles and written reports for any trips which may be organised during the year.

The Garden Trainees are overseen by our teaching staff of Gardener Instructors, seasoned experts in their fields who have worked in a wide range of gardens themselves. The garden has three department areas: the grounds (lawns, hedges, herbaceous borders, woody plants, alpines, hard landscapes, aquatic, and bog), the walled garden, and the glasshouses. Although most of the time will be spent in the grounds, the Garden Trainee will work in each of these areas, moving between them on a rota basis, to ensure in-depth training across the seasons. Trainees will work alongside the Gardener Instructors, other garden staff and volunteers, receiving hands-on tuition and practical experience. There will be some limited classroom time, however this is primarily a practical role where trainees will spend 95% of their time working in the garden. Study and assignments will be completed largely in their own time. Trainee only shared accommodation within easy walking distance is available for rent.

## **KEY RESPONSIBILITIES AND ACCOUNTABILITIES**

While in the garden the Garden Trainee will be formally line managed by the Head Gardener and will have the support, guidance and direction from other members of staff they are allocated to work alongside. The employment is for a fixed period of 1 year, subject to continued progression on the programme with acceptable practical performance.

Trainees will be expected to take responsibility for their learning which will include significant out of hours study, practice of skills and/or project work.

## **ABOUT THE GARDEN**

The School of Heritage Gardening, based at Threave Garden was formed in 1960, shortly after the National Trust for Scotland took ownership of the property. For over 65 years we have been teaching horticultural skills and techniques to aspiring professional gardeners. Former trainees have gone on to have successful careers in the industry, many choosing to stay with the Trust.

Threave Garden is perfectly suited for a range of training requirements, having been created over the years to accommodate a variety of horticultural situations. The garden has a large and diverse plant collection set within an extensive landscape and includes features such as a rock garden, fruit and vegetables, ponds, naturalised bulbs, woodland, orchard, nursery, lawns, herbaceous beds, mixed borders, and glasshouses. This purposefully broad array of garden landscapes, plants and features ensures that trainees are able to receive an extensive and well-rounded experience, covering many aspects found in a career in horticulture.

Threave is an approved centre to deliver Royal Horticultural Society qualifications, one of only a handful across Scotland.

## **REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS, SKILLS, EXPERIENCE & KNOWLEDGE**

This is a development role intended to take the Garden Trainee to competent professional gardener level for the heritage garden sector through the vehicle of the RHS Level 2 *Certificate in Practical Horticulture*.

### **Essential:**

- A practical horticultural qualification at SVQ Level 2 or equivalent is preferred as a minimum, however places are also open to those with academic horticultural qualifications or who have proven practical gardening experience.
- Prior achievement at SCQF Level 5 or above is required to underpin learning
- Commitment to out of hours study and practice of skills
- Enthusiasm for horticulture with a positive approach to undertaking fundamental horticultural tasks
- Level of computer literacy, to produce well-prepared diaries and reports
- A good level of communication skills to converse clearly with colleagues and visitors
- Proof of the right to work in the UK
- Able to follow clear instructions competently
- Willing to work outside in all weathers and undertake physically demanding tasks
- Commitment to completing the training year (August to August), including RHS practical examinations held three times during the year
- Time management skills in being able to work flexibly and to a deadline
- Good people skills enabling strong relationships both externally and internally, to be built and maintained
- Able to use tools and equipment as required for the role

### **Desirable:**

- Proven ability to work flexibly as part of a team
- Prior experience in a customer service role – our gardens are open to the public almost every day!
- Prior knowledge of relevant Health and Safety procedures
- Prior experience of horticultural machinery

## **DIMENSIONS AND SCOPE OF JOB**

### The Garden Trainee

- will work as part of the garden team increasing their knowledge and experience of duties such as soil cultivation, weeding, establishing and maintaining plants and displays, propagation, turf care, using tools equipment and machinery, and much more. This will include physically demanding activities in all weathers
- will take responsibility for their learning which will include significant out of hours study, skills practice and/or project work
- will be required to meet regularly with Trust staff to discuss progress, assessment of which is constantly monitored in order to provide developmental feedback
- will take part in additional training offered by the Trust
- will be based in Threave Garden but may be given opportunities to visit or work in other Trust gardens
- will work 5 days out of any 7, which may include weekends and evenings helping with events and other activities
- will work closely with rest of the property team, and the area Gardens & Designed Landscapes Manager
- will be expected to interact daily with other staff, volunteers and visitors and may be asked to meet donors who are supporting the Trust with finance
- will be expected to participate, contribute, and feature in promotional activities/material for the School and the Trust
- is not a budget holder but will be responsible for submitting any expense claims in good time and in line with allowances

**The Key Responsibilities, Scope of Job, and Required Qualifications, Skills, Experience & Knowledge 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.**

## **OUR PACKAGE**

**Employee card** – free entry for you, one other adult and any of your children to National Trust for Scotland and National trust properties as well as a 20% discount on most purchases in National Trust for Scotland retail outlets.

**Pension scheme** – generous defined contribution pension scheme

**Holiday** – we offer a generous annual holiday entitlement as soon as you join the Trust. For full time employees it's 30 days plus 7 ½ days around the festive period.

**Offers and discounts** –discounts through benefit schemes and 20% discount on all National Trust for Scotland holiday cottages and 10% discount on all self-catering accommodation through Sykes Holiday Cottages.

**Independent support services** – Free and confidential **Employee Assistance Programme** giving unlimited access via Spectrum.Life app

## **HOW TO APPLY**

Interested applicants should forward their Curriculum Vitae (CV) or an Application Form to the People Services Department (Applications) by email via [workforus@nts.org.uk](mailto:workforus@nts.org.uk), by Sunday 3rd May 2026.

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 "Garden Trainee - Threave"

Placements are likely to commence late August 2026.