NATIONAL TRUST *for* SCOTLAND

Job Description Nov 2026

Role: First Gardener - Woodland	**Region:** Highlands & Islands
Reports to: Head Gardener	**Pay Grade:** Grade 4 - £33,245 Per Annum
Location: Inverewe Garden, Poolewe, IV22 2LG	**Type of Contract:** Permanent. Full-Time, 40 Hours Per Week.
Cost Centre: 3INE	**Activity Code:** GA1
Terms and conditions *The post is subject to the standard terms and conditions provided with the application pack and the following special terms also apply: hours of work = 40 per week on 5 days out of 7 days and at times to suit the needs of the job. Accommodation may be available if required.*	

JOB PURPOSE

Under the leadership of the Head Gardener, this role manages the delivery of Inverewe Gardens' shelterbelt management plan - a subset of the property's overall Garden Heritage Plan. It is a hands-on role, delivering practical arboriculture and horticulture within woodland settings across the property, whilst leading a small team of gardeners.

CONTEXT

Inverewe is a garden of international importance. Created by Osgood Mackenzie in the late 19th century, and in NTS ownership since 1952, exotic plants flourish in a challenging northern landscape of spectacular mountain and coast. Inverewe's planting has always been developed to 'push the boundaries'. It is renowned for its variety of designed elements and an extensive plant collection of national significance, including notable collections of rhododendrons and southern hemisphere plants.

The "shelterbelt" of mixed coniferous and broadleaf trees rings the more formal "planted" garden and the tree canopy provides the stable, humid, and sheltered microclimate that allows the plant collection to thrive, as well as influencing the character of the garden as a backdrop and gateway to the landscape beyond. While the importance of the shelterbelt and tree collection has long been recognised, with their loss representing an existential threat to the garden itself, it has been difficult to consistently implement management plans to ensure the resilience of these features for the future.

The Head Gardener, First Gardener (Woodland), and First Gardener (Ornamental) form Inverewe's Garden Management Team, collectively ensuring the development and delivery of the property's Garden Heritage Plan, whilst integrating seamlessly with the wider estate (2,500 hectares of forestry, shore, and moorland), visitor services (100,000 visitors annually), and the context of the local community.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES AND ACCOUNTABILITIES

- Understand, develop, and deliver Inverewe's shelterbelt management plan, including (but not limited to):
    - General care of trees and their understory, such as trimming/lopping, felling, planting, invasive non-native species removal, pest and disease control;
    - Undertaking tree inspections and remedial actions to promote tree health and maintain a safe woodland garden environment;
    - General care, maintenance, and development of planted borders and clearings within the woodland garden;
    - Managing soil health – including appropriate composting;
    - Managing and developing the property's bio-char approach, for both internal use, and as a commercial product;
    - Liaising with Inverewe's Propagator to ensure an appropriate nursery of replacement trees, and implementing agreed planting/re-planting plans, or opportunist planting;
    - Liaising with Inverewe's Ranger over the recording, monitoring, and maintenance of the shelterbelt as an important habitat;
    - Outreach and education in the form of guided tours, talks/lectures, community engagement events.
- Supervise the team of gardeners and volunteers assigned to woodland garden and shelterbelt work, ensuring that they are motivated, trained, developed, and deliver their duties to the required standard.
- Manage any delegated budget in the optimal way, taking a "best value" approach without overspending.
- Manage health & safety for the woodland garden and shelterbelt activities, including (but not limited to):

    - Undertaking and recording general and specific risk assessments for areas of the woodland garden and shelterbelt activities to mitigate hazards and risks;
    - Undertaking and recording routine and *ad hoc* tree inspections, and any remedial works;
    - Servicing of tools and equipment (including PPE) according to manufacturer's recommendations, and logging their use;
    - Appropriate storage, issuing, and COSHH assessment of chemical agents used in the woodland setting;
    - Advising – and if necessary, taking decisions on – the closure of parts of the garden or the garden as a whole in situations such as high winds/storms to ensure the safety of colleagues and visitors.
- As required "stand in" for the Head Gardener or First Gardener (Ornamental) to ensure complete garden management/supervisory coverage (in times of e.g. sickness absence, annual leave).
- As required by the Head Gardener, help with gardening activity in *any* part of the garden.
- As required, as a senior member of the Inverewe management team, contribute to the Property's overall operations and development.
- As required by the Operations Manager, support tree/woodland work at Corrieshalloch Gorge.

The current duties of this job do not require a criminal records (Disclosure Scotland) check to be carried out.

DIMENSIONS AND SCOPE OF JOB

Scale

- Inverewe is at its heart a Temperate Rainforest Garden, the tree canopy of primarily Caledonian pine provides vital shelter and light shade suitable for the protection and development of the woodland garden containing notable collections of rhododendrons, exotic trees and shrubs, woodland herbaceous perennials and bulbs.
- These layers of growth and Garden infrastructure will be managed with a team, one aspect of managing the woodland and shelterbelt will be handling the effects of challenging climate conditions such as storms, significant windy weather and episodic rainfall. Under the direction of the Head Gardener, you will maintain and

rejuvenate the historic, horticultural, and ecological significance of the woodland garden and shelterbelt of approximately 35 acres. You will ensure there is a generation of tree replacement for the maturing canopy. The pine canopy has become a recognised theme of the garden, and the presumption is that we would aim to retain a similar species composition through the development of the shelterbelt programme utilising the principles of continuous cover forestry. This will continue to be develop based on observation as the restoration proceeds.

People Management

- Not a line manager, but day-to-day supervisor of up to 3 employees and 5 volunteers;
- Works seamlessly with the First Gardener (Ornamental) as a peer for the delivery of gardening at Inverewe, and with the Head Gardener to form the Inverewe Garden Management Team;
- Works as part of the property's wider management team, including those who manage the services provided for visitors;
- The role holder work may have some interaction with other technical/specialist advisory colleagues;
- Will have regular (daily) interaction with members of the public of all ages and abilities.

Finance Management

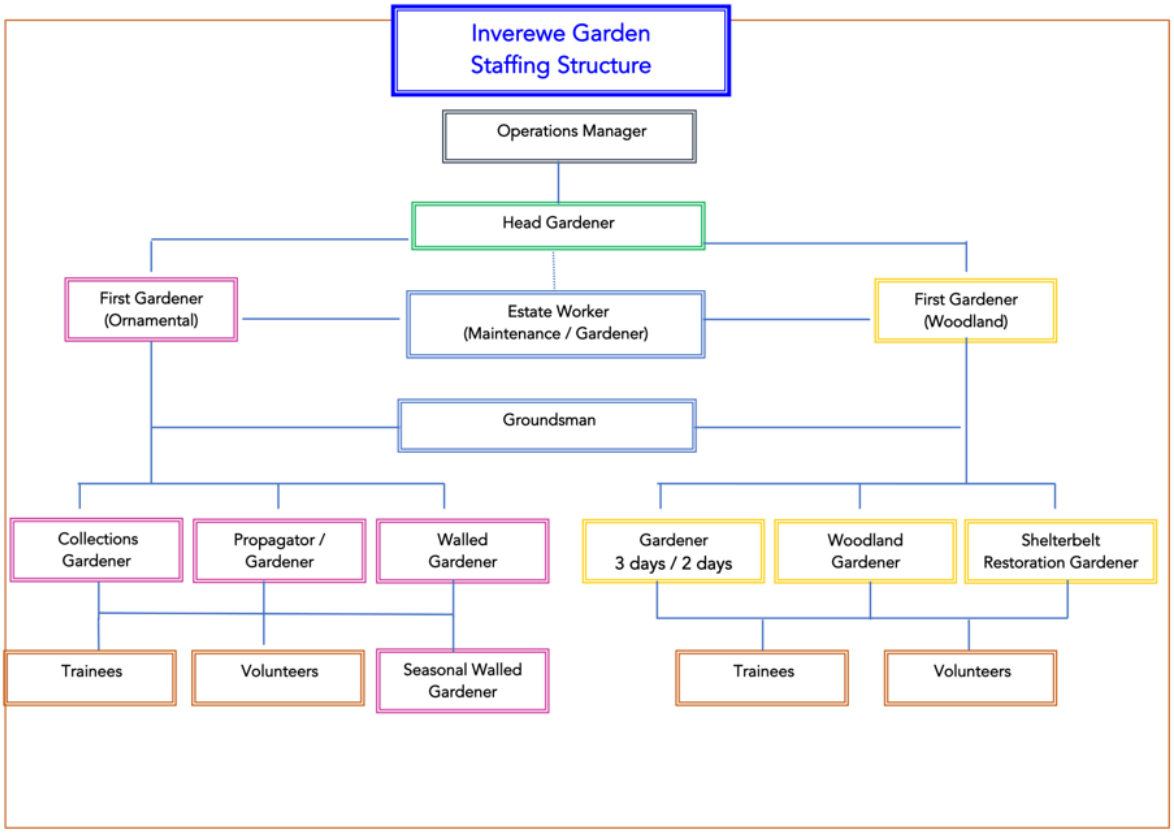
- Not a budget holder, but may be assigned a small element of the wider gardens budget.

Tools / equipment / systems

- Will be a frequent user of driven vehicles such as tractors and trailers;
- Will be a frequent user of powered tools such as, winches, mowers, brush-cutters/strimmers, woodchippers, shredders, chainsaws;
- Must be comfortable working at height using ropes and harness;
- Will be a frequent user of IT Microsoft packages such as Word, Excel, Teams, Outlook – and a user of GIS or other mapping/recording software and plants database.

- Frequent user of hand-tools such as spades, forks, trowels, rakes, hoes, shears, and secateurs.

Place in team structure



REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS, SKILLS, EXPERIENCE & KNOWLEDGE

Essential

- A Level 2 qualification in arboriculture or forestry, or RFS certification or demonstrable equivalent technical knowledge
- Level 3 LANTRA tree inspection certification
- A RHS Level 3 in amenity horticulture, or demonstrable equivalent technical knowledge
- Professional qualifications in chainsaw use, tree climbing and aerial rescue, use of chainsaw from a rope and harness, rigging and dismantling, felling medium trees and dealing with windblown trees
- Certificates of competence in use of tractors, trailers, chippers, strimmers/brush-cutters

- Significant practical experience in care, maintenance, and development of amenity woodlands open to the public and as a species-rich natural habitat, including experience and knowledge of composting systems and soil health
- Sound demonstrable plant knowledge and identification skills, tree propagation and nursery work, control of pests and diseases, and invasive non-native species eradication
- Excellent IT skills for maintaining plant and H&S records, GIS mapping, spreadsheet management, creating and maintaining SharePoint sites etc
- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills
- Good organisational and time-management skills – including the ability to prioritise work where necessary
- Experience as a team/squad-leader.

Desirable

- Experience delivering tours, talks, and community outreach
- Experience creating and posting social media content.

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 their general abilities.

HOW TO APPLY

Interested applicants should forward their Curriculum Vitae (CV) or an Application Form to the People Department, The National Trust for Scotland, by email via workforus@nts.org.uk, by Sunday 9th January 2027.

- Please ensure your CV includes your full name and contact details
- The CV file sent to us should be titled with 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 "First Gardener - Inverewe"
- Interview dates will be week commencing 1st February 2027