

Merlin Trust WRAGs Trainee Bursary Report

Kate Stanford

I was fortunate enough to be granted a bursary from the Merlin Trust in July 2024. I used the bursary of £200 in part payment for the fee to WRAGs for my garden trainee placement. I started the placement in July at Alscot Park. This is my first horticultural job having studied for the RHS Level 1 Certificate in the Principles and Practices of Horticulture from September 2023 to June 2024, for which I received a Distinction.

The move to horticulture is a career change for me. I was previously in digital project management for around twenty years. Undertaking the WRAGs placement, with the help of the Merlin Trust bursary, will give me the opportunity to put into practice the skills I learned on the RHS course and help me build up my CV ready for applications to other horticultural settings once my placement has finished. Since starting my placement, I have had the opportunity to get involved in designing new planting schemes, propagation, fruit and vegetable growing, lawn maintenance and composting, in addition to the regular tasks associated with care and maintenance of herbaceous borders, trees, shrubs and annuals.

Alongside my WRAGs placement, I have been volunteering in the gardens at Kenilworth Castle English Heritage site. The funding from the Merlin Trust meant I was more easily able to give my time for free to the English Heritage in support of their ambition to care for historic sites so they can be enjoyed by future generations.

Once I have completed my placement, I hope to move to a public garden, ideally with a focus on organic growing, biodiversity and no dig principals. I believe the WRAGs placement will provide a solid foundation from which I can continue my new career in horticulture, which I hope will make a difference in a small way to the conservation of our natural world.

