

Merlin Trust WRAGS Bursary Report

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After nearly 25 years in Engineering I made the change to Horticulture in September 2024. As I tried to navigate the change, I volunteered at NT Hanbury Hall and the Spetchley Park Estate garden. I did this whilst completing the RHS Level 2 in Practical Horticulture at Pershore College.

Having discovered WRAGS through conversations whilst volunteering, I was delighted to get a 12 months WRAGS placement with Gill at Stanley Hill Flowers in January 2025.

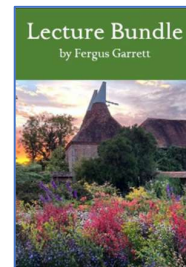


The WRAGS placement reassured me with regard to my career change and now fully committed, I applied for the Merlin Trust WRAGS bursary to help fund my further horticultural education by enrolling on the RHS Level 2 - Certificate in the Principles of Plant Growth and Development. However, having secured further alternative support, I was able to use the £300 award to fund different learning.



In parallel to my WRAGS placement I also worked and volunteered at Birtsmorton Court – a medieval moated manor house and wedding venue. During discussions with Head Gardener, Mike Gogerty, we spoke at length about Great Dixter and Mike recommended a series of lectures by

Fergus Garrett available via the vimeo platform.



Costing £100, access to these lectures is not particularly cheap. However, Fergus is an engaging and inspirational presenter and the talks give a 'peep behind the curtain' into Great Dixter, Christopher Lloyd's legacy and some excellent practical instruction. Lectures including:- 'Winter Work at Great Dixter', 'Dixter Tricks', 'Pruning' and 'Spring at Great Dixter - Borders and Layers' being my personal highlights.

In addition to the lecture bundle I have also used the Merlin Trust funding to attend WFGA workshops on Salvia propagation, Ornamental grasses, Planting and Garden design – my write up of the Salvia workshop making the WFGA Autumn/Winter 2025 newsletter!



The funding has enabled me to expand my horticultural horizons and forge new connections within the industry.



I am now applying the knowledge I have gained to further assist Mike at Birtsmorton Court and to help a private client near Worcester rejuvenate her large garden. There is so much to learn in horticulture and I feel like I have only just scratched the surface.