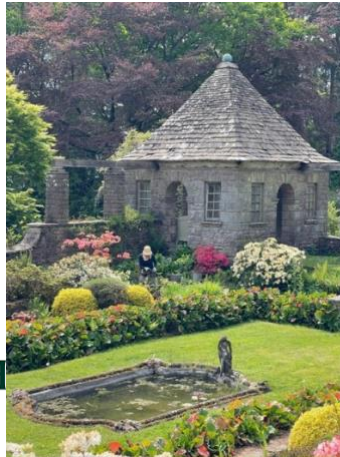


# Merlin Trust WRAGs Bursary Report

Fleur Bence



My wonderful Merlin Trust WRAGs bursary 2025 has contributed towards the fees for my RHS Level 2 Certificate in the Principles of Plant Growth and Development course. The bursary was intended to be put towards the fees for the classroom based University of Bristol teaching, however in August 2025 the University took the decision to cease being an RHS training centre. I am now instead doing the RHS Level 2 Theory certificate online through the Royal Botanic Gardens of Edinburgh which I started in October 2025.

I have been doing my WRAGS training at Wyndcliffe Court House in Monmouthshire, one day a week over a two year period and am due to complete my training in April 2026. To enhance and supplement my the practical knowledge and skills built up during my training I felt the RHS Level 2 theory course would be invaluable. The RHS Level 2 theory course is in 2 parts and I am currently studying the first part with the intention of sitting one or two of the two required exams in June 2026, the second exam, if need be, will be held in February 2027. Doing the course online isn't ideal for me because I learn better in the company of others and with a teacher, but what I am learning is so fascinating. So far I have a deeper understanding of the science of plants, and more importantly plant health and nutrition, the diagnosis of diseases, disorders and pests, competition with other plants. I am using this knowledge when I am working in my WRAGS placement in terms of understanding more about how to look after the garden and its plants. This knowledge will be invaluable for future work I have in gardens, helping me to care for plants and to advise and assist garden owner clients which more confidence.

Going forward I am currently reaching out to experienced gardeners such as those I am meeting in the Bristol women gardeners community. I am considering working alongside such experienced gardeners, building up my practical skills and working with clients. I will in the near future have my own clients or would love to work in private historical estates. Going forwards too I would also like to study planting design, potentially garden design and RHS level 3 training to enhance my knowledge and skill set.