

Barbara and Philip Denny Trust Report by Lizzy Mansfield

2nd Report Covering May to October 2017

It has been a wonderful summer (not always weather-wise) in the garden, and it has involved so many new experiences. It has been very busy everywhere but particularly in the vegetable garden. The three apprentices are each in charge of certain sections of the vegetable garden although we work closely together to assist one another. This year I am in charge of brassicas, leaves and the Little Green Fingers bed and it has been a steep but fascinating learning curve as prior to the apprenticeship I have had limited experience of growing vegetables.

Prior to this year I never knew how attached you could get to a cauliflower or cabbage but I have found myself telling anyone who will listen stories of people admiring any of my vegetables. Growing them has involved learning such a variety of skills. These have involved sowing seeds, both indoors into seed trays and outdoors into drills direct in the soil, which although I have done this previously we attended a workshop at the beginning of the season with Lucy Hart, the Head Gardener, to ensure we carried it out corrected and in a uniform way to ensure peak germination. Following on from the seed sowing indoors we also learnt how to prick out the seedlings from the seed trays in 9 cm pots allowing the seedling greater space to develop roots and grow, this allows us to bring on plants ready to plant out when the frosts have passed.

Working in the Walled Garden has also involved great team work not only with my fellow apprentices and gardeners but with our brilliant volunteer team. There are such a large number of tasks to carry out in the Walled Garden to keep it looking top-notch for visitors such as watering, weeding, deadheading and edging that would be near impossible without their help, it has also helped me develop my soft skills such as team work, leading small teams and good communication. Their assistance also allows us apprentices to carry out more technical tasks such as mowing where we are been trained on agricultural machinery which is so crucial to our future careers.

Working on the Little Green Fingers bed has been such a positive experience – not only have I been able to grow a variety of crops on a small scale but I was able to assist at one of their first Saturday sessions of the year. Little Green Fingers is a children's workshop giving hand-on gardening experience and their enthusiasm for vegetable growing and amazement at the process was infectious. In addition I was able to assist on a Garden Trail, an event which encouraged members of the public to explore the vegetable garden, understand the variety of crops that we grow and try vegetables they might not have tried before. I enjoyed being able to convey my enthusiasm not only for the vegetable garden but Fulham Palace and all the exciting plans that are to come.

In addition to the training I received on the job from Lucy and the two garden supervisors I have now started at college to study the RHS Level 3 Certificates in Plant Growth, Health and Applied Propagation and Practical Horticulture. I really enjoy being at college, I am gaining so much knowledge that I can apply practically at Fulham Palace. I also get to network with other people in the horticulture industry. As part of our ongoing learning we take part in plant identification tests at Fulham Palace, being able to identify and name plants is a crucial part of being a gardener and helps prevent embarrassment when I get asked questions by members of the public!

Whilst we have been working throughout the gardens there has been a particular emphasis on the walled garden but now with autumn arriving I am looking forward to participating in the many and varied projects outside the walled garden. Many of these are part of the third phase of the HLF funding which is incredibly exciting and I feel very lucky to be an apprentice at Fulham Palace at this time and to be part of these changes and gain experience that I wouldn't receive in other gardens.