

NATIONAL TRUST FOR SCOTLAND MEDIA RELEASE

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National Trust for Scotland invests in the future of Scotland's heritage gardens

The National Trust for Scotland has hired five new trainee gardeners in the second year of its Garden Apprentice scheme.

With a shortage of specialist heritage gardeners, the programme, which had its first intake in 2018, was created to nurture the next generation of talent to care for the Trust's 38 important gardens and designed landscapes.

The programme is based on the Modern Apprenticeship in Horticulture at SVQ Level 2. The new trainees took up post this September across five National Trust for Scotland properties and have embarked on an intensive learning journey about horticulture and conserving heritage gardens.

The recruits aged between 16 and 24 are based in Pitmedden Garden in Aberdeen; Branklyn Garden in Perth, Inverewe in Wester Ross, Culzean Castle in Ayrshire and Harmony & Priorwood Gardens in Melrose. They will shadow the gardening team at each property, reporting directly to the head gardener.

The new intake of students will spend their 2 years working across various projects in their gardens and in classroom learning at SRUC Oatridge College to understand the basics of horticulture as well as group and solo projects.

They will learn the art, craft and science of professional horticulture – from pruning, grafting and glasshouse cultivation, to plant identification, principles of design and the use of gardening machinery and tools. The scheme promises to teach trainees up-to-date approaches to managing important heritage places as well as traditional and craft skills.

The 2018 intake of apprentices came together to work on a joint project at Arduaine Garden, Argyll in August, marking the end of their first year. The project saw the apprentices put into practice skills they had learned in their first year by helping to remove a diseased larch shelterbelt in order to protect the wider garden.

Ann Steele, head of heritage gardening policy at the National Trust for Scotland said: "With the first intake of our pilot garden apprentice scheme proving so successful, we've been eager to learn and improve for this second intake. There has been extremely positive feedback from all involved in the scheme so far.

"Engaging young people in horticulture and our heritage gardens will allow us to care for and maintain our wonderful gardens for future generations. The combination of classroom learning with practical work experience alongside industry professionals allows the apprentices to really learn the essentials of heritage gardening and to own their own projects and experiences."

Trust Gardens and the Garden Apprentice scheme are generously supported by donors with a real interest in gardens. These generous gifts demonstrate the power of philanthropy to this important area of the National Trust for Scotland's work. To donate to projects or learn more visit www.nts.org.uk/donate.

