

Bedfordshire Head Gardeners Network



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Bedfordshire Gardens Trust

What does a head gardener do?

Skills

Specialist technical skills and ability. Proven management and policy-making ability. Ability to curate a historic garden and its plant collections. Excellent communicator. Ability to manage and deliver garden projects.

Responsibilities

Management, policy, budgeting for large workforce, either in a large or complex garden/estate. High-level quality control and strategic planning and site promotion. Managing contracts, contractors and staff. Curation of garden and its plant collections.



The Management & Maintenance of Historic Parks, Gardens & Landscapes: The English Heritage Handbook (2007)

Why are head gardeners so important?

“For their conservation, gardens need constant replanning and renewal. They need firm and decisive management, and the criticism of advisors and others who come with a fresh eye and an understanding of the garden’s history.

But without the skill, dedication and enthusiasm of head gardeners and their staffs nothing could be achieved. It is upon the calibre, training and supply of gardeners that the future of our gardens overwhelmingly depends.”

John Sales, former Chief Gardens Advisor to the National Trust

The variety and challenges of a career in gardens

coastal to hill top sites - variable growing conditions - pocket handkerchiefs to vast landscapes - extensive variety of features

Styles

American Gardens	Knot Gardens
Arboretums	Landscape Parks
Arts & Crafts Gardens	Parterres
Autumn Gardens	Pinetums
Cottage Gardens	Quarry Garden
Courtyard Gardens	Rock Garden
Cut Flowers Borders	Rose Gardens
Deer Parks	Sub-tropical Gardens
English Landscape Gardens	Sunken Gardens
Formal Gardens	Walled Gardens
Formal Parks	Water Gardens
Herb Gardens	Wild Gardens
Intimate Gardens	Wilderness Gardens
Italian Gardens	Wildflower Meadows
Japanese Gardens	Winter Gardens
Kitchen Gardens	Woodland Gardens

Features

Arbours	Orangeries
Arches	Orchards
Avenues	Ornaments
Bedding Schemes	Pergolas
Bothies	Potting Sheds
Bridges	Prospect Mounts
Cascades	Sports Lawns
Conservatories	Statuary
Ferneries	Summer Houses
Glasshouses	Terraces
Grottoes	Tool Sheds
Ha Ha's	Topiary
Hedges	Tunnels
Ice Houses	Vineyards
Mazes	Water Features
Moats	Woodland Walks

What support is out there for head gardeners?



Local

- In-house gardens & landscape departments (NT/EH)
- Colleagues/Managers/Owners

National

- Chartered Institute of Horticulture (£115 pa)
- Professional Gardeners Guild (£45 pa)
- PlantNetwork (£40 pa upwards)
- Horticulture Week (£250 pa)

Why is support at a local level important?

- Shared local climate challenges
- Plant disease spread prevention
- Similar pest control issues
- Security alerts
- Supplier reviews and recommendations
- Training & job opportunities
- Plant swaps/propagation
- Travel and/or budget limitations
- Moral support

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Early trials 2016



Launch meeting at the Swiss Garden
February 2018

How does it work?

- Three meetings a year
- Hosting in rotation
- Seasonal catch-up
- Speakers/themes
- Garden tours
- Distribution of notes
- Member contacts
- Minimal costs
- No dress code!
- Biscuits!



Anniversary meeting - Stockwood Park, Luton
February 2019

Where are we now?



Luton Hoo Walled Garden – July 2019

- The Swiss Garden
- Woburn Abbey
- Houghton Hall Park
- Jordans Mill
- Luton Hoo Walled Garden
- Stockwood Park
- RSPB Sandy
- Moggerhanger Park
- Ampthill Great Park
- Southill Park
- Old Warden Vineyard
- Silsoe Horticultural Centre (CBC)
- Bedford School
- Ashridge

What does the future look like?



Amphill Great Park – November 2019

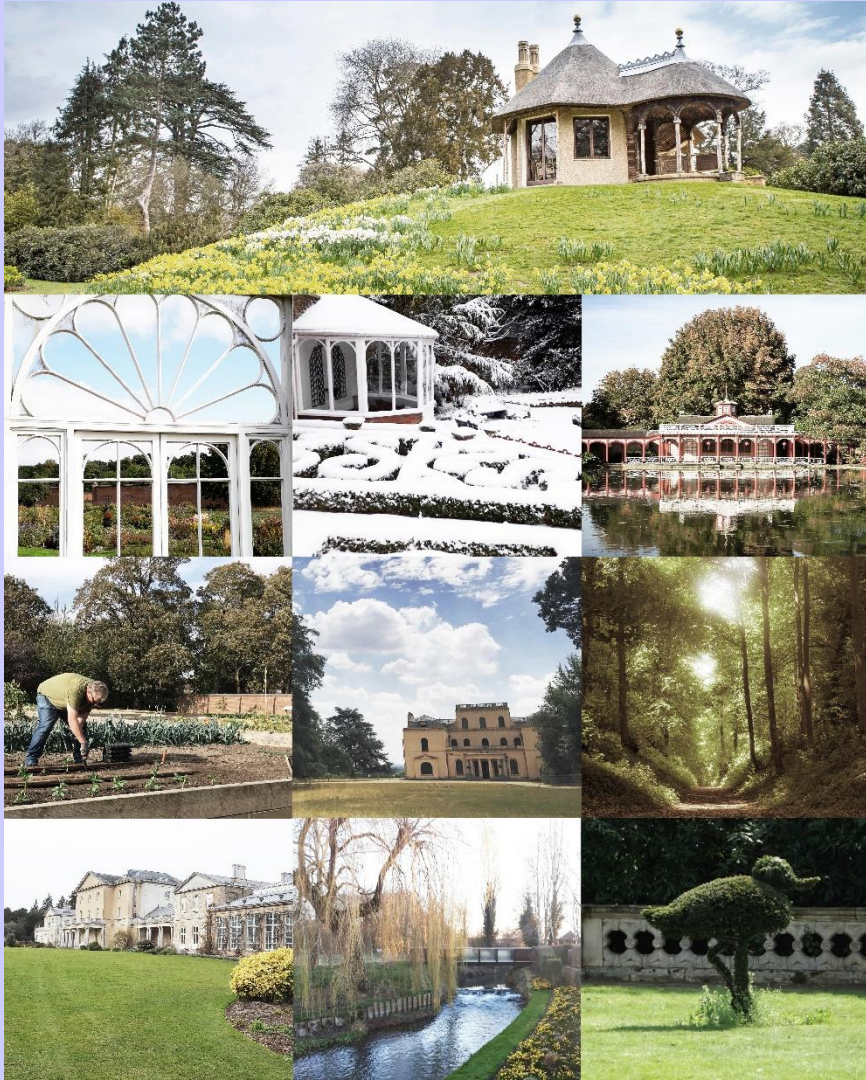
- Reaching out to more Bedfordshire gardeners
- A more active social media and website presence
- Facilitating and supporting the network
- Rolling out to other county gardens trusts?

Horticulture Week Custodian Awards 2019

Finalists - Best Partnership



Working together to strengthen Bedfordshire's horticultural heritage



'It seems to be increasingly important that those working in gardens and parks work collaboratively not only to share knowledge and information but to also help promote your site and gain inspiration. As many of us work in small teams and don't have professional colleagues to turn to for advice, having a network of head gardeners at hand is a great asset.'

**Phil Nicholson, Park & Amenities Manager,
Amphill Park**

Bedfordshire Gardens Trust

Thank you!

