



Gardener's Cuttings

People, Plants and Opportunities

Stefano Ciabo, Trainee Gardener

I happily remember Sean's phone call following the interview offering me the trainee position, asking if I needed some time to think it over. I replied, with no hesitation, that I was truly looking forward to joining the Inn. This was the start of a two year, fascinating journey that will be coming to an end this September. I would like to share the people, plants and opportunities the traineeship has given.

People

People make places, and special people make places unique. This is true of the Inn, not only was I warmly welcomed by the Garden team and the volunteers but also introduced gradually to all the staff of the different departments. I also began to interact with members and residents, alongside a large number of fellow horticulturists from different gardens of London and nearby areas.

As part of my traineeship, I am part of the London Garden Network committee, which has been a great opportunity for networking and interaction. I have found myself surrounded by an incredible amount of expertise, stretching from planning and management to ecology and biodiversity. I feel I have been enriched professionally and would like to thank the many people that have contributed to this.

Plants

The Inner Temple Garden is a truly plant person's paradise, home for experimental planting with a strong focus on sustainable practices and wildlife friendly choices. The garden is constantly evolving, and as a result the team seeks new additions, changes and improvement. This results in projects, whether a major re-design of an area or adding exciting new plants within existing schemes.



During my first weeks in the garden, we planted thousands of *Narcissus 'Thalia'*, a delicate white daffodil, in the west border below one of the majestic *Liriodendron tulipifera*. The aim was to mirror the opposite bed facing Paper Buildings and to link the area with surrounding meadow areas, full of spring flowering bulbs. The challenge was to lay and plant the bulbs in the most naturalistic way possible, trying to achieve a 'river' meandering throughout the bed. Watching these emerge for the past two



The 'river' of *Narcissus 'Thalia'* in the West side



The Garden Team

springs making the desired ‘river’ has really lifted this side of the garden.

During my second year, I was asked to share my observations and select plants to be added along the west side border to enrich the biodiversity and the botanical collection amongst the Hydrangea collection. I enjoyed researching and finding the right plant for the right place, and I was very pleased to see that Sean appreciated my selection. I’m particularly curious to see how these plants, which include the columnar evergreen tree *Eucryphia × nymansensis* ‘Nymansay’, the bee friendly *Heptacodium miconioides* and the Japanese angelica tree *Aralia elata*, will grow and develop.

Opportunities

I have been fortunate over the past two years to undertake work experiences and study tours in other renowned gardens in the UK and abroad. I spent a week at Gravetye Manor in West Sussex, under the supervision of plantsman Tom Coward. I had a week of training on rose care and maintenance at Sissinghurst Castle and Gardens in Kent, which boasts an incredible collection of roses and a unique way of training them.

I joined the garden team at Beth Chatto Garden in Essex, which for decades has been at the forefront of selecting drought tolerant plants suitable for the changing British climate.

One study tour to France and Italy gave me One giving the opportunity to research acclimatisation gardens of the 19th century in the Italian and French Riviera. In the second study tour, I’ve undertaken an investigation on ancient *Camellia* cultivars in Tuscany, from first introduction to subsequent distribution and conservation projects.

Kew beckons

Mixed feelings will accompany me towards the end of my two years. Leaving will certainly be emotional. Though I know I will be sad, my mind is full of joy and happy memories of my time as part of the Inn. Though, I will not go far, as I’ve been selected for the Diploma at Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew to work and study for the next three years. This is going to be an important step for my career, and I can honestly say that the people, plants and opportunities that the Inner Temple gave me made this achievement possible. If you are ever at Kew Gardens, please do stop and say hello.



Working with some of our volunteers on bulbs planting in containers



Tom Coward and me at Gravetye Manor