

First Report for the Barbara and Philip Denny Trust by Patricia Stadler, January 2022

My name is Patricia Stadler and I am honoured to be able to introduce myself as one of the new apprentices at Fulham Palace. Having started my role on the first of November, the past three months spent here have been filled with an enormous amount of learning, discovery and astonishments.

Before diving professionally into horticulture, I worked as an event manager, but even then I was spending a large amount of time looking after my numerous plants.

Led by head gardener Lucy Hart, the garden team constitutes of three garden apprentices, two senior gardeners, and more than 50 volunteers. Oh, and I shall not forget our cats- Edmond, who is extremely photogenic, and Pamunkey, who joined the team lately as an efficient pest control manager.

The list of activities and skills I have been doing is long and exciting: Mulching, bulb planting, pricking out, potting on, harvesting, weeding, sowing and pruning to name a few.



Photo above: All of the mentioned tasks were entangled with our Christmas Fair 2021, which meant wreath making! This photo shows my excitement to be holding one end of a 5meter long Christmas garment

I was especially impressed when learning about the hemi-parasite yellow rattle (*Rhianthus minor*), which is a flowering plant that will compete with grass and allow other wildflowers to grow. Less lawn leads to a biodiverse meadow that attracts more pollinators. All in all a total winner as a meadow area look so pretty too!

Another fascinating morning was the vine pruning of our heritage grape species. Cutting back more than 80% of the plant, I was being quite timid to leave so little of the plant. But trusting nature and learning its growing power within only one season is an exciting part of the horticultural learning process. Taking away sometimes results in a more abundant harvest and greater flowers, which I find mind-blowing. As a full circle, we have been making wreaths with the long off-cut twigs, which shall be dried and used for next years Christmas Decoration.



Photo above: Head gardener Lucy finishing a wreath

Fulham Palace's values of biodiversity, organic growing methods, environmentally conscious planting schemes and a "giving back approach" are all close to my heart. I believe that being an apprentice gardener here is helping me on my journey to discover and learn to nurture the true natural beauty that we are surrounded by.

To deepen my knowledge, I get to participate one day a week in an RHS level 2 course in Regent's Park. Meeting students from different workplaces and getting to share and exchange with them has been very nourishing.

Getting trained on machineries such as the turf cutter, tractor and lawn mower are also part of the program.



Photo above: Once settled on the tractor, we got taught how to efficiently turn the compost. It was really impressive to see it fume

One of the remarkable aspects of Fulham Palace is its modern and contemporary approach to gardening while embracing and continuously researching its historical past. I took part in a historical tour of the palace such as an archaeological tour of the garden- I would highly recommend both of them.

You get the idea- there is always something happening at Fulham Palace Gardens. I cannot put forward enough my enthusiasm to be learning so much from the great gardeners and volunteers team. The welcoming within that team has been exceptional.

I look forward to hearing the buzz of people visiting and enjoying the garden on the warmer days.

Many thanks to Barbara and Denny Trust