

# Fulham Palace House & Garden

## The Barbara and Philip Denny Trust

Report 3 – Ellis Lewis  
18 December 2025

Start Date: 18th March 2025

I am now past the halfway point of my apprenticeship, and it saddens me to think that I am closer to the end of the course than the beginning. It has flown by, and I'm not sure where the time has gone, but one thing I know for certain is that I have loved every single day. That is entirely because of the amazing people I work with. Thanks to them, I have learned so much and made real progress in both my horticultural career and my personal development. The past few months have been tough, with the loss of a dog and other challenges, but Fulham Palace has truly been a place of comfort for me. It means more to me than I can express.

### In the garden

The garden is looking exceptional. It has been a warm autumn, and the colour across the site has been stunning. There has been plenty of work to do, with tasks such as leaf raking, weeding, and general autumn tidy-up. We have also cleared many of the vegetable beds and mulched them to protect the bare soil. General maintenance has continued across the Compton border and the pollinator borders. The knot garden is a highlight at this time of year, with its beautiful perennial seedheads that look incredible when touched by frost.



The wildlife pond frozen over

### Propagation

The semi-ripe cutting season is almost over, but over the past three months we've taken and propagated a huge number of cuttings. This has been invaluable to my horticultural journey, giving me the chance not only to learn essential techniques but also to experiment. We are now moving into autumn seed sowing, including sweet peas, wallflowers, calendula, and poppies.

## **Kitchen garden responsibility**

With the veg season coming to an end, it has been a good time to reflect on how the kitchen garden has performed at Fulham Palace and what improvements we can make for next year. Apart from a few minor tweaks to cultivars and ideas to reduce disease spread in the brassica net, the foundations are firmly in place. Everything in the garden has been tried and tested by my predecessors, and it's exciting to continue building on that. It's not completely over yet — the Brussels sprouts are nearly ready, and I'm sure they'll be very popular on the market barrow for those who even like eating them (definitely not me)!

## **General maintenance and machinery use**

I've had an impressive amount of practice using the machinery at Fulham Palace. This includes grass cutting, leaf blowing, and now hedge trimming after receiving my Lantra ticket through the Surrey Horticultural Training Group. We've put that training to use by cutting the myrtle hedges and the pyracantha boxed hedges, which are looking the best they have ever been. I've also completed tractor training and am now in-house qualified to use our Kubota tractor across the site for tasks such as turning compost and operating the trailer.



Me using the cylinder Mower

## Market barrow and events

In my last report we were in preparations for apple day, and I'm pleased that that event came and went smoothly. At the Palace, Christmas has been and gone as well, but the festive season work has been full on. We spent lots of time in the buildup to the fair creating beautiful Christmas decorations for the palace. The Christmas Fair ran from Friday to Sunday, and although it was exhausting, I thoroughly enjoyed it. We ran a garden stall selling green woodworking items, Fulham Palace preserves, potted plants, and wreaths, as well as helping with general marshalling. Wreath-making has been one of my favourite tasks of the season, from foraging foliage to constructing and decorating each wreath.



Wreaths ready for decoration

The following weekend, we held wreath-making workshops over four sessions. I helped set up displays and assisted participants, which I found very rewarding. The market barrow is still well stocked with dried flower bouquets, wreaths, forced daffodils, and various other items.

## Horticultural knowledge and college

I feel my horticultural knowledge has improved significantly. Although I still have work to do on Latin plant names, I'm confident in what I've learned and excited for everything still to come. College at Capel Manor in Gunnersbury Park is going very well. I've learned so much already, and every week brings something new that I enjoy. I've built good connections with my classmates, and although there is plenty of revision ahead, I'm hopeful and determined to complete my course to the best of my ability.

## **Biodiversity and sustainability**

We have had some corporate groups in over the past three months who have helped us manage the moat. We cut down roughly three-quarters of the moat vegetation, which is the most biodiverse part of our site. This helps keep vigorous species under control, but each year we leave one quarter of the wild area untouched, so wildlife has a place to overwinter. We have also carried out woodland and meadow maintenance, with biodiversity always at the heart of what we do. Our sustainability efforts continue across the site. I helped maintain the pond by reducing organic matter — we cut down pond plants to limit how much material enters the water. Across the site we also leave seedheads standing through winter for the benefit of birds and invertebrates.



Corporate volunteers cutting down the moat

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, I have really been enjoying my experience here. Although the work is full-on and a lot is expected of us, I enjoy the environment I am in and feel well supported and mentored by my line managers. Fulham Palace is a unique place — small and independent, yet ambitious, striving for equality, excellent visitor experience, strong educational value, and a sense of sanctuary. I understand and share that ambition, and I truly believe Fulham Palace is a special place.

With many thanks to the Denny Trust,  
Ellis Lewis.