

## Winter 2018 /19

I was warned by Phil and Emma that the apprenticeship flies by, and they weren't joking! The first few months have passed in a shot. Meeting and getting to know the crew at Bedgebury has been a blast and the volunteers who tear through such a phenomenal amount of work are amazing. The variation in tasks ensures no two days are the same and the installation of the Christmas lights provided an added element of excitement.

My first week included re-caging specimens, weeding, mulching, working with the volunteers, tidying the nursery, mountain bike trail maintenance and helping in the set-up of Christmas at Bedgebury.

The rhododendrons and azaleas of the Glory Hole and the yew collection were targeted areas over this period, and both are looking markedly better for the removal of asphyxiating brambles. Working among the yews has a particular historical significance: some were planted out from the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew during the Pinetum's inception. The array of species on show is spectacular and makes for one of the most beautiful office locations anyone could hope for.



I spent the first week of December at an induction course in Cannock getting to know the other apprentices as well as Forestry Commission best practices and procedures. It was fascinating to hear everyone's very different paths into the FC, although a passion for trees was universal. It will be great to see how we all develop over the next two years.



From the middle of December, the focus was on thinning the pines to the left of the Walled Garden. This process is another interesting step in the evolution of the Pinetum as more space has been opened up for the specimens such as [Taiwan Cunninghamia](#) (*Cunninghamia konishii*), [Lacebark Pine](#) (*Pinus bungeana*) and [Cathaya argyrophylla](#). The fast-growing pines' role as protector from the elements is vital in the successful establishment of the specimen trees with the collection.

Chris Reynolds, Ana Perez-Sierra and Matt Parratt from Forest Research visited the Pinetum in the week before Christmas to conduct a comprehensive survey of the fir collection at Bedgebury. The purpose of this survey was to grow knowledge about the spread of *Neonectria neomacrospora*. This airborne fungus causes canker leading to crown dieback; this has resulted in mortalities with especially severe attacks on Nordmann fir in Denmark and subalpine fir in Norway. While a spot survey was undertaken at Bedgebury in 2015, this time round every tree was analysed for condition, cause of damage and to determine whether *Neonectria neomacrospora* was present. With this data



Forest Research will be able to track the progress of each tree and see whether the fungus is developing. Since, the Pinetum houses such a wide variety of firs, it provides an essential living laboratory where pests and diseases can be assessed in a small area. More information [here](#).