

October 2018

In the last month of our apprenticeship Ibrahim Mitole, Programme Officer of the Mulanje Mountain Conservation Trust in Malawi, visited Bedgebury. We have been working with Ibrahim and his colleagues as part of the Mulanje Cedar conservation project. The purpose of the visit was for us to share knowledge about our collection and the Forestry Commission, and for him to visit locations that might provide useful insights for his projects. Ibrahim and I spent a day at Forest Research where we saw how they sort, x-ray and experiment with seed. We also visited a research plot where timber species of different provenances are being tested to discover if they might offer resilience to climate change in the future.

The autumn task of flailing the grass continued this month. Phil and I attended a course and gained tickets in this skill to enable us to contribute to the work in the future.



Top – Showing Ibrahim the forest by bike

Bottom – Timber research plots at Alice Holt

Left – Flailing and the *Franklinia alatamaha*

Our autumn guided walks were back again this year and with stunning colour. I led a group of 9 people on a perfect sunny day. The programme was slightly different this year with more detailed information being shared with the attendees. All of the feedback has been really positive and it is rewarding to know that we have been able to share some of our key conservation work with visitors.



Above – Early morning autumn sunlight through hemlocks

Right – Marshal's Lake swamp cypresses and dawn redwoods

Pictured here are some of my favourite autumn photos. The *Franklinia alatamaha* looks particularly beautiful at this time of year with its fragrant white flowers against a backdrop of red leaves. This plant is extinct in the wild and can only be found in cultivation.





Above – Roy Lancaster talking about his garden.
- Training with Fiona in the nursery for my new role

Below – Phil and I at the beginning of the apprenticeship

Right - The last day of the apprenticeship



I was lucky enough to end the month with a weekend visit to the Sir Harold Hillier Gardens hosted by the International Dendrology Society. There were several speakers over the weekend and topics included the genus of *Rubus* and cherry species followed by tours of the garden. The weekend concluded with a fascinating visit to the garden of the famous plantsman Roy Lancaster.

Sadly, October was the last month of our apprenticeship. It has been a fantastic two years and I have thoroughly enjoyed gaining new skills and knowledge. I'd like to say a big thank you to everyone who has shared their time and helped me throughout the two years, especially to the Friends of Bedgebury Pinetum for sponsoring one of our salaries and to Dan and Julian for their support.

Excitingly, Phil and I have been successful in gaining permanent positions and are going to be able to stay on at Bedgebury, Phil as a Craftsperson and me as Nursery Supervisor. To prepare for this change of role I spent several days in October shadowing and training with Fiona, the Propagator, in the nursery before she retired at the end of the month.

This will be my last blog as an apprentice but you may hear from me again in my new role in the future.

Thank you for following and reading my blog!

