



What is involved in a gardener's job at Loftus Garden Village?

We gardeners are a close-knit team of three who love our jobs and take pride in looking after Loftus.

My remit as Head Gardener covers a wide range of duties which are all part and parcel of managing the day-to-day running of Loftus at ground level. I am the point of contact for residents and if I come across problems that our team of gardeners can't rectify then it is passed on to Katie Bush or David Adams to deal with.

I am a Head Gardener/Manager who also does much of the gardening work too. Paul is the Assistant Gardener and Jo is our Apprentice Gardener, who does online college from home one day a week. Between us we cover almost all the gardening work as well as litter picking and daily inspections which includes reporting any covenant breaches e.g. dumping of rubbish. This is part of our job.

Throughout the summer months it is quite obvious what gardening tasks we are up to, Paul does most of the mowing and strimming but you will also see Jo with a mower now and again learning the ropes. The areas we cut are mowed at least fortnightly which is evident to see but the other jobs such as feeding, weeding and watering often go unnoticed. This includes the application of nematodes twice a year to kill the leather jackets, it's all work that is just as important as the mowing to keep the grass healthy and looking good but you might not be aware of. Hedge cutting is a mammoth task at Loftus as there are so many of them and some grow much quicker than others meaning the predicted twice yearly cut often ends up as three or four throughout a 12-month period. Again, this a very public task and throughout the summer you will often see us with a hedge cutter in our hands but what does go unnoticed and unappreciated is what happens to all the waste afterwards.

We have a skip permanently on site that has to be emptied at least once a month, sometimes more. Anything woody that can't be composted goes in the skip along with all the rubbish and litter we have to pick up around site. Anyone who's ever had to hire a skip will know it's not cheap. The grass cuttings and any soft green waste

go into our composting bays in our nursery, but it doesn't end there. The process of composting into a useable material for the following year requires turning the heap several times within the 12 months to get air and heat into the pile and get it all cooking. This speeds up the composting process which could take two years or more if just left to rot down by its self.

Weeding is an ongoing job all year round and constant dead heading keeps flowers coming all summer. This I'm sure goes unnoticed but if we suddenly stopped then it would quickly be picked up on , weeds would quickly colonise everywhere and Loftus would look just like any other estate. Throughout the winter we are also busy with jobs that can't be done in the summer. Not all plants are managed with just a trim twice a year, some like herbaceous flowers and ornamental grasses need to be dug up and divided when dormant. This rejuvenates them and makes the cost of one original plant go a long way. Each time its dug up and divided there are spare new plants produced for elsewhere around Loftus.

Another important part of our job which I don't think people understand is community engagement. Covid-19 has stopped this over the past 12 months but before that we have organised numerous events and activities for residents and children of Loftus.





The Kitchen garden was a huge success and the children's pumpkin growing competition was great fun for our budding future gardeners. Children were shown how to plant and look after the pumpkins then at the end of the year they harvested the fruits of their labour to make lanterns for Halloween.



We have also organised a garden competition for residents and a pebble painting competition for the children. This was so popular we run out of pebbles and had to go searching for more, in the end almost 50 kids took part. This also involved a presentation of prizes at the church. Since then we have organised a treasure hunt and a speed awareness competition where the winning posters have been displayed around Loftus.



We have dressed up at Halloween with the kids and Father Christmas who turned on the Christmas tree lights was also one of us. All these events have been captured in the community section of My Loftus website and all photos that include children were only used after seeking written consent off the parent.

There are all sorts of other jobs that would bore you to tears so I haven't mentioned everything we do. But basically an awful lot of effort and dedication from your team of gardeners goes in to keeping Loftus looking lovely. We do much more than your average team of estate gardeners would do and the kind words and comments we get from many residents are much appreciated.