

# So, you want to be a Head Gardener?



In amenity horticulture few jobs can match that of Head Gardener, or Gardens Manager. Often with a staff of gardeners under you, the job involves full responsibility for the development and maintenance of what may be large and historical gardens.

Michael Walker is Gardens Manager at Waddesdon Manor, Buckinghamshire. He is responsible for the maintenance and development of this superb National Trust garden, along with a private water garden.

Michael started his career as a landscape and nursery worker, in his native Belfast, where he went on to study horticulture at Greenmount College, Antrim.

After leaving college, Michael worked at Mount Stewart garden in County Down, before moving on to a traineeship at Powis Castle in Wales.

Describing himself as a practical gardener, rather than an academic, Michael can look back at a career that has taken him to some of the great gardens in the UK, including Castle Drogo in Devon and Beningborough Hall in Yorkshire. Perhaps one of the highlights of Michael's career so far was while working at Harewood House, again in Yorkshire, where he was responsible for the restoration of a historical garden.

As well as being responsible for the building of new gardens, and the maintenance of existing ones, it is the restoration of old historical gardens that can be so rewarding. It is often seeing an old, sometimes derelict, garden come to life that makes being Head Gardener so enjoyable.