

Job Title:	Trust Estates Gardener/ Horticulturist
Location:	Bedford Academy with regular travel between school sites
Reports to:	Chief Operating Officer (COO) with close working links to Headteachers, School Sustainability Leads and site teams
Hours of work:	Part-time; currently 20 hours per week, with flexibility according to seasonal demands and Trust requirements
Purpose of post	To use horticultural expertise, practical gardening skills and a strong commitment to biodiversity and sustainability to help the Trust develop, maintain and improve school grounds as safe, inspiring, biodiverse and climate-resilient outdoor environments.

HEART Academies Trust is a family of academies, at the heart of the community, improving life chances for all through challenge and support. We strive to transform educational outcomes of students from a young age by providing exciting, new and different opportunities for learning and applied learning. Our overwhelming belief is that every child can be successful, both personally and academically, with early and effective help from staff that know and value them as an individual. HEART Academies Trust aims to bring about a substantial increase in the educational attainment, expectations and aspirations of all in our community.

The role of Trust Estates Gardener/ Horticulturist will be based at Bedford Academy with regular travel between schools.

Job Purpose

The Trust Estates Gardener/Horticulturist will play a key role in helping the Trust and its schools create and maintain a more biodiverse, attractive and resilient school estate. The post holder will combine practical horticultural skill with creativity, environmental awareness and a passion for improving outdoor spaces for children, staff and the wider school community.

This role will support teaching and learning by helping schools develop outdoor classrooms, food-growing areas, sensory and wildlife gardens, quiet well-being spaces, shaded areas and purposeful play environments. The post holder will also help the Trust respond to climate and sustainability priorities by using planting, landscape design and grounds management to improve biodiversity, reduce overheating, manage surface water, support flood control and create healthier, greener places for learning and play.

Key Responsibilities

Horticultural Design, Development and Maintenance

- Design, develop, plant and maintain gardens, borders, planters, wildlife areas, growing spaces, sensory spaces and other landscaped areas across Trust school sites.
- Advise on appropriate planting schemes that are attractive, sustainable, low-maintenance as required, suitable for school environments and resilient to changing weather conditions.
- Plan and deliver seasonal horticultural programmes, including soil preparation, planting, pruning, watering, composting, mulching, propagation and general plant husbandry.
- Support the development and maintenance of vegetable gardens, herb beds, orchards, polytunnels, raised beds and other food-growing areas that can be used by pupils, staff, catering teams and school clubs.
- Help schools create beautiful, purposeful outdoor spaces that enhance the appearance of the school estate and promote pride in the learning environment.

- Monitor plant health, identify horticultural issues and take appropriate action to manage pests, diseases and weeds in a safe, proportionate and environmentally responsible way.

Biodiversity, Climate Resilience and Sustainability

- Champion biodiversity across the Trust estate by identifying opportunities for wildflower planting, native species, hedgerows, trees, pollinator-friendly planting, bird and insect habitats, ponds, log piles and other wildlife-supporting features.
- Work with the Trust and schools to implement biodiversity improvement plans and contribute to measurable environmental outcomes, including long-term maintenance and sustainability of planted areas.
- Use planting and landscape design to help reduce the impact of adverse weather conditions, including providing natural shade, reducing heat build-up, improving shelter, slowing surface water run-off and supporting natural drainage and flood management.
- Support climate and sustainability objectives by promoting composting, water conservation, sustainable materials, reduced chemical use, peat-free growing, reuse of resources and environmentally responsible grounds practices.
- Contribute to the development of greener outdoor wellbeing areas for pupils and staff, including spaces that support reflection, calm, play, social interaction and connection with nature.
- Ensure biodiversity thrives throughout the year, including school holiday periods.
- Keep up to date with relevant developments in horticulture, biodiversity, climate adaptation and sustainable grounds management, and share good practice with colleagues.

Outdoor Learning, Play and School Engagement

- Work with school leaders, teachers and support staff to create practical opportunities for outdoor learning linked to food growing, biodiversity, science, climate education, wellbeing and environmental stewardship.
- Support the development of safe, engaging outdoor areas that encourage play, exploration, curiosity, creativity and physical activity.
- Assist schools in establishing and maintaining gardening clubs, eco-clubs, pupil-led growing projects and seasonal planting activities.
- Provide practical advice, demonstrations and guidance to pupils and staff where appropriate, helping build confidence and enthusiasm for gardening, food growing and nature-based activities.
- Support schools in using outdoor spaces inclusively, including creating calm, sensory or therapeutic areas that may benefit pupils with additional needs or those requiring pastoral or wellbeing support.
- Promote respect for school grounds and encourage pupils and staff to value, protect and enjoy their outdoor environment.

Contractor, Site and Resource Management

- Work collaboratively with the Trust's grounds maintenance contractor, site teams and external partners to ensure grounds maintenance supports the Trust's biodiversity, sustainability and educational objectives.
- Provide advice on tree planting, establishment, aftercare and succession planting, referring specialist tree safety or arboricultural matters to appropriately qualified contractors where required.
- Support the planning, specification and delivery of small grounds improvement projects, including planting schemes, outdoor learning areas and wellbeing spaces.
- Maintain appropriate records of planting plans, maintenance schedules, stock, tools, equipment and relevant site observations.
- Identify practical problems across school grounds and recommend realistic, cost-effective solutions that balance safety, appearance, educational value, biodiversity and long-term maintenance.
- Assist with sourcing plants, materials and equipment, ensuring value for money and alignment with sustainability principles.

Health, Safety and Compliance

- Carry out all work safely and in accordance with Trust health and safety procedures, school site arrangements and relevant risk assessments.
- Use tools, machinery, substances and personal protective equipment appropriately and only where competent and authorised to do so.
- Apply safe working practices when undertaking manual handling, working outdoors, using gardening tools, operating machinery, working near pupils or visitors, and managing public-facing school spaces.
- Follow relevant guidance relating to Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (CoSHH), pesticide use, equipment safety and safe storage of materials.
- Report hazards, defects, unsafe areas, damaged equipment, tree concerns or site risks promptly through the appropriate Trust or school channels.
- Ensure that outdoor areas used by pupils, staff and visitors are maintained with safety, supervision and safeguarding considerations in mind.

General Responsibilities

- Promote and uphold the Trust's values, ethos and commitment to providing safe, inclusive and inspiring learning environments.
- Promote biodiversity and support the Trust achieve its ambitious climate and sustainability objectives.
- Work collaboratively with colleagues across the Trust, school leaders, site teams, contractors and external partners.
- Maintain confidentiality and handle information appropriately in line with Trust policies and procedures.
- Take responsibility for personal professional development and keep skills and knowledge up to date.
- Support equality, diversity and inclusion by helping ensure outdoor spaces are accessible, welcoming and beneficial to pupils, staff and the wider school community.
- Undertake any other duties commensurate with the grade and nature of the post as reasonably required.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

	Essential	Desirable
Qualifications, training and experience	• Relevant horticulture, gardening or grounds maintenance qualification, or equivalent substantial practical experience; at least five years' experience in horticulture, professional gardening, estate gardening, amenity horticulture, grounds maintenance or a closely related field. • Awareness of health and safety requirements relevant to outdoor work, machinery, tools, manual handling and work in school environments	• Experience of working in a school, educational, community, public estate or similar environment. • Relevant training or certificates in safe use of machinery, pesticide application, chainsaw use, first aid, manual handling or CoSHH. • Experience of working with external contractors, suppliers, local community groups, charities or environmental organisations.
Horticultural knowledge	• Strong practical knowledge of plants, soil preparation, planting, pruning, propagation, seasonal maintenance and plant care.	• Experience of supporting outdoor learning, Forest School, gardening clubs, eco-clubs, pupil engagement or community growing projects. • Experience of growing food in allotments, polytunnels, raised beds, orchards or kitchen gardens.
Biodiversity and sustainability	• Knowledge of biodiversity-friendly and sustainable gardening practices, including native planting, pollinator support, composting, water-conscious planting and reduced chemical use.	• Knowledge of climate adaptation approaches such as natural shading, rain gardens, sustainable drainage, drought-tolerant planting and flood-resilient planting.
Planning, creativity and design	• Ability to plan, prioritise and manage a varied workload across multiple sites. • Creativity and a good eye for detail, with the ability to design and maintain attractive, purposeful and practical outdoor spaces.	
Personal Attributes	• A practical, flexible and solutions-focused approach, with the ability to work independently and as part of a wider Trust team. • Good communication and interpersonal skills, with the ability to work effectively with school leaders, staff, pupils, contractors and external partners. • Physical fitness appropriate to the demands of the role. • Basic IT and record-keeping skills.	

General	• Commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. • Commitment to the Trust's climate and sustainability vision and to upholding the values and ethos of HEART Academies Trust. • Willingness to undertake required training, maintain professional knowledge and comply with Trust policies, procedures and statutory requirements. • Ability to travel across Trust schools and attend sites as required to support operational delivery.	• Understanding of working within a multi-academy trust, education, public sector or regulated environment.
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