

## Gardener

Gardeners work in one of two main areas. One is **amenity horticulture**, where they look after parks and gardens, both public and private, so that they look attractive all year. The other is **commercial horticulture**, where they grow fruit, vegetables, plants or trees for sale.

### The Work

In **amenity horticulture** you could be:

- sowing seeds, raising plants and taking cuttings
- mowing lawns, pruning trees, planting and weeding flower beds and tidying borders
- maintaining motorway verges or central reservations
- applying pesticides and fertilisers
- using hand tools such as spades, trowels and hoes
- cutting hedges, clearing leaf litter and compost making
- using and maintaining machinery such as strimmers and leaf blowers
- driving motorised vehicles such as lawn mowers or tractors
- working in heritage or conservation gardens, public parks and gardens or private residential gardens.

In **commercial horticulture** you could be:

- growing crops outdoors or in glasshouses
- using hand tools such as spades, trowels and hoes
- feeding, watering and fertilising crops
- checking temperatures and soil quality
- harvesting crops and getting them ready to sell.

### Pay

The figures below are only a guide. Actual pay rates may vary, depending on:

- where you work
- the size of company or organisation you work for
- the demand for the job.

Apprentice arborists will be paid the minimum wage for apprentices in Scotland. The apprentice rate, for those aged under 19 or aged 19 or over and in the first year of their apprenticeship, is £7.55 an hour (1 April 2025).

Starting salaries for gardeners in Scotland tend to be in the range £15,500 to £17,000 a year. Salaries are in the region of £17,000 to £25,000 a year for experienced and qualified gardeners. Senior or head gardeners can earn up to £40,000 a year, sometimes more.

Some gardeners are self-employed so their earnings will vary, depending on how successful they are.

## Conditions

- Much of the work is outdoors, but some may be inside glasshouses.
- Outdoors it can be wet, windy and cold.
- In glasshouses it can be very warm and damp.
- Some of the work can be dirty and you may wear protective clothing.
- You would have to do a lot of bending, kneeling, lifting and carrying.
- You would normally work around 37-40 hours per week.
- In summer, hours may be longer, including evenings and weekends.
- You may work as part of a gardening team in some jobs.

## Getting In

- A good general education is useful. Some employers may prefer some subjects at National 4 or 5.
- You may get in through a Modern Apprenticeship programme which leads to SVQs at SCQF Levels 5 and 6.
- You could take a full time course leading to an NC or NQ (SCQF Levels 4-6) in a horticultural subject before applying for a job.
- Entry requirements for these courses vary from no qualifications up to 4-5 subjects at National 4 or 5.
- Previous work experience in gardening is helpful.
- A driving licence is useful, sometimes essential, particularly if you want to work for yourself.

Depending on the job, you could work in a plant or tree nursery, garden centre, orchard, vegetable farm, local authority park or nursery, garden open to the public or private estate or garden.

## What Does It Take

You need to be:

- interested in plants and gardens
- interested in science, to know how to deal with pests and diseases
- practical and good with your hands
- able to work on your own or as part of a team
- physically fit
- willing to work outside in all weathers
- aware of safety when using machinery
- able to follow instructions and routines.

If you want to be a horticultural manager you also need to be:

- a good organiser
- able to manage staff
- able to manage resources and keep accounts.

## Training

- Training is on the job, along with part time college courses to get an SVQ, NC or HNC (SCQF Level 7),

whichever is appropriate.

- Modern Apprenticeships normally lead to an SVQ.
- You could take some of the courses and qualifications run by the [Royal Horticultural Society \(RHS\)](#) while you are working. Some training providers offer these on a distance learning basis.
- You might undergo training for using specific equipment, such as chainsaws, and for carrying out tasks such as spraying.

## Getting On

- With experience, you could apply for a supervisory job, such as Head Gardener, with responsibility for staff.
- You may be able to move into a management job, but you might need to gain more qualifications first.
- You could set up your own business, either growing plants or designing gardens.

## More Information

Vacancies are often advertised in relevant trade magazines and websites including:

- [Horticulture Week](#)
- [National Trust Scotland \(NTS\)](#)
- [Horticulture Jobs](#)
- [Myjobscotland](#) (Scottish Local Government Vacancies)

Volunteering can be a good way to build up useful gardening experience. The National Trust for Scotland (NTS) has nearly 4,000 volunteers who do everything from guiding visitors around, to tending gardens and building footpaths.

You might also be interested in finding out about therapeutic gardening and the work of [Trellis](#), the national Scottish charity that supports, promotes, and develops the use of horticulture to improve health and wellbeing.

## Contacts

### Chartered Institute of Horticulture

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Email: [cih@horticulture.org.uk](mailto:cih@horticulture.org.uk)

Website: [www.horticulture.org.uk](http://www.horticulture.org.uk)

X: [@cihort](#)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/CIHort](http://www.facebook.com/CIHort)

### Lantra Scotland

Tel: 024 7669 6996

Email: [scotland@lantra.co.uk](mailto:scotland@lantra.co.uk)

Website: [www.scotland.lantra.co.uk](http://www.scotland.lantra.co.uk)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/lantrascotland](http://www.facebook.com/lantrascotland)

### National Trust for Scotland (NTS)

Tel: 0131 385 7490

Website: [www.nts.org.uk](http://www.nts.org.uk)

X: [@N\\_T\\_S](#)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/NationalTrustforScotland](http://www.facebook.com/NationalTrustforScotland)

**Royal Horticultural Society (RHS)**

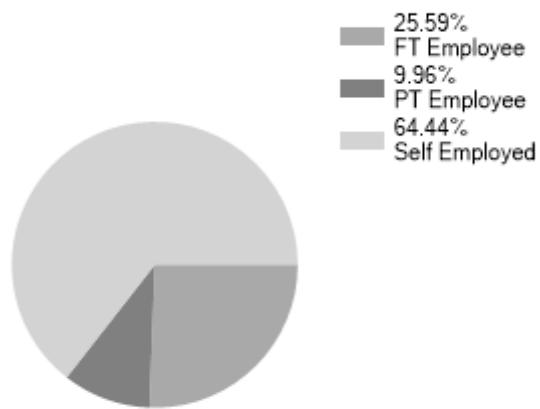
Website: [www.rhs.org.uk](http://www.rhs.org.uk)

X: [@The\\_RHS](https://twitter.com/The_RHS)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/rhshome](https://www.facebook.com/rhshome)

## Statistics

Employment Status UK %

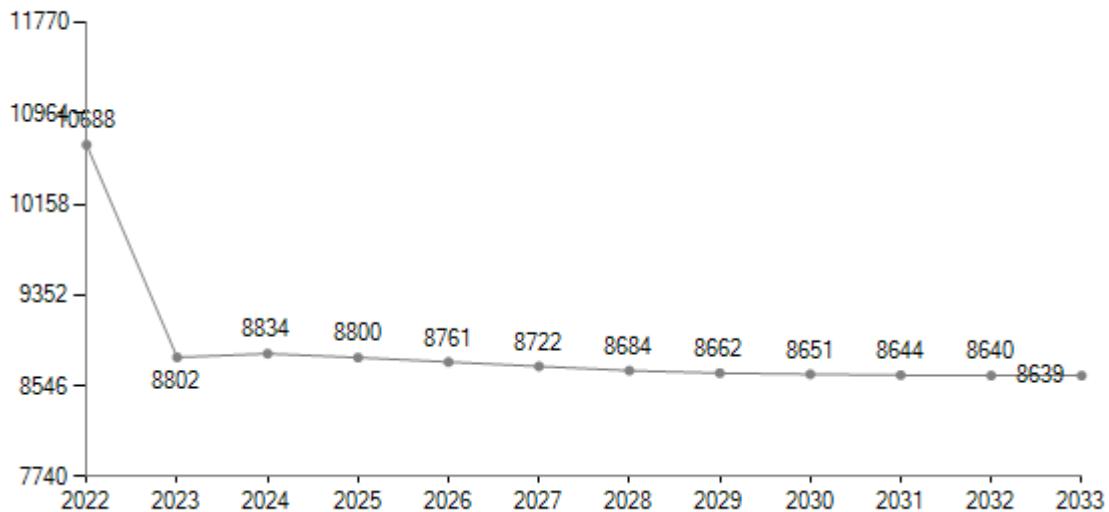


### Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

LMI data powered by [LMI for All](#)

Predicted Employment in Scotland



LMI data powered by [Lightcast](#)