

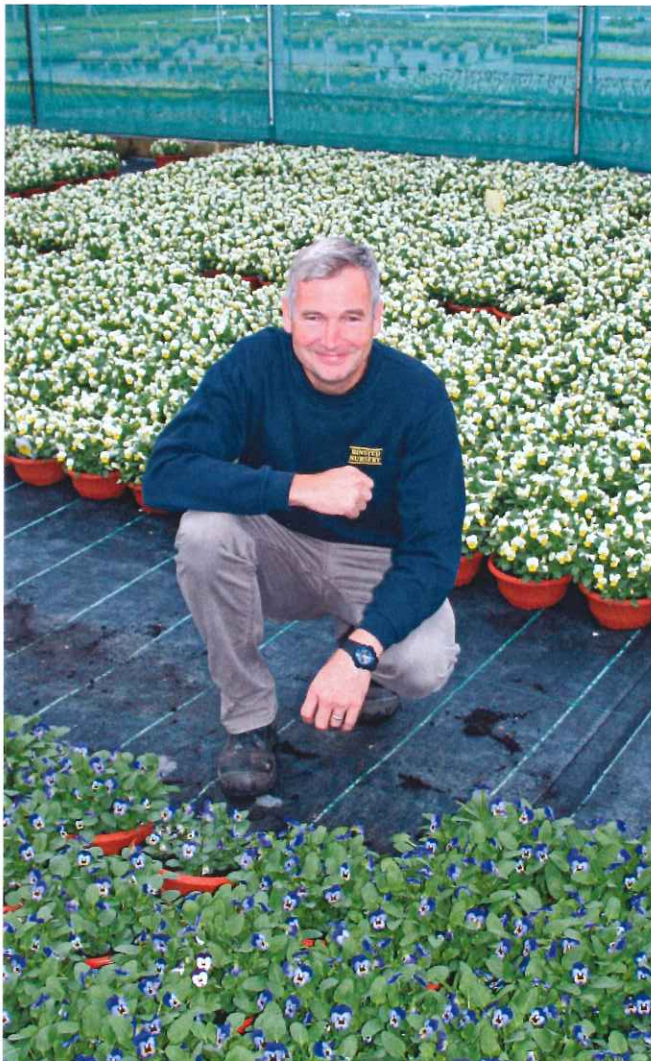
Do you want to earn between £20,000 & £40,000?

Have you thought about a career in commercial horticulture?

Commercial horticulture - the growing of plants for commercial purposes
Food crops - fruit, vegetables, salads, herbs, grapes for wine-making
Flowering plants, trees and shrubs for gardens/parks; fruit trees

Crops are either grown in the field or under protected conditions, in glasshouses or polytunnels

CASE STUDY



NAME

Jim Willis

Binsted Nursery, West Sussex
(a member of the Farplants Group - the largest wholesale supplier of outdoor plants to garden centres and chains in the UK). The nursery grows ornamental herbaceous perennials, herbs and bulbs on 16.5 acres, split over three sites. These include seven and a half acres of glasshouses and polytunnels and seven acres of outdoor growing areas, including a high tech propagation unit.

ROLE

Production manager/ operational technical manager

SALARY

£20,000 to £40,000 bracket for this type of role

QUALIFICATIONS NECESSARY

Science based degree/diploma; apprenticeship plus experience. (I have a National Diploma in Commercial Horticulture).

IS TRAINING GIVEN?

Yes – continuing professional development training, from health and safety to management and crop protection.

WORKING LIFE (WHAT DO YOU DO?):

I start between 7am/8am and I am on call at weekends so if something goes wrong with the control of the crop environment, I get a call triggered by a computer. Every morning I do a quick walk around to check crops, especially vulnerable crops. I look at the growing environments to see whether they all are functioning correctly. Discuss with supervisors any staff issues, eg absence.

Work on projects, daily staff tasking, crop protection, substrate management, crop planning, recording, health and safety, auditing (other nurseries under the BOPP scheme), staff recruitment, discipline, meeting suppliers, staff training, staff meetings, purchasing sundries. Visit satellite sites. Thursday sees a regular meeting with the crop protection supervisor. We discuss all pests and disease reports and integrated crop management plan, also any growth regulants or other treatments that the crops require. Every Tuesday and Friday I walk all the crop areas with relevant staff. We discuss crop growth and pests and diseases, also work planning and any other issues. Every afternoon at 2.45pm I meet with other managers and supervisors to discuss work and the staff allocation for the following day.

SKILLS AND PERSONAL QUALITIES:

IT skills, patience (growing crops is a long term job), leadership, attention to detail, decision making skills, project management skills, flexible and adaptable. Happy to work outdoors, physically fit for the job, good practical skills, reliable, responsible, able to work in a team or alone, organisational skills, interested in plants, confident in the operation of machinery.

DID YOU DO ANY WORK EXPERIENCE BEFORE JOINING?

Yes – left school at 15 and did an apprenticeship in Commercial Horticulture, working in vegetable production, cut flower growing, fruit growing and garden centre environments, before studying for a National Certificate in Horticulture. This allowed me to jump straight into the second year of a three year Diploma in Commercial Horticulture.

[Since this interview, Jim Willis has moved to Toddington Nurseries, another member of the Farplants Group, in West Sussex, where he is now Technical Manager.]

ROUTES INTO HORTICULTURE:

Routes vary but a good education is useful. Previous experience of working in horticulture may prove useful.

Apprenticeship schemes available for over 16s.

Some roles require study in Higher Education.

See www.lantra.co.uk/careers