

Do you want to earn between £18,000 & £30,000?

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

Leonie Britcher

ROLE:

Assistant Technical Manager / New Product Development Manager, Watts Farms, (leading UK fresh herb and vegetable supplier), Farningham, Dartford, Kent [www.wattsfarms.co.uk]

QUALIFICATIONS NECESSARY:

Agricultural / Science / Food based / Business Degree / Diploma. I have a National Diploma in Agriculture and previous experience in the industry.

IS TRAINING GIVEN?

Yes, continuing professional development – for example training in farm / packhouse auditing, Health and Safety, supply chain and quality control management.

WORKING LIFE (WHAT DO YOU DO?)

I am largely office based. I also spend time in the packhouse running trials and reviewing product quality. I am occasionally out on the farms looking at crop/product trials.

Watts Farms produces 50 different product lines (herbs and vegetables) for retailers, wholesale customers and also for our own food service business, Watts Farms Catering. Part of my role as New Product Development Manager (NPD) is to research new crops for the farm team to grow.

Generally, I work from 7.30am until 5.30pm for five days per week. I work one weekend in four managing the packhouse. I have my smartphone with me 24/7. The business is fast moving so it's important to be able to think on your feet.

My technical role involves preparing for farm / packhouse audits, monitoring customer complaints levels, organising supplier compliance documents, managing the quality control team....The list is endless, which means every day is different.

SKILLS AND PERSONAL QUALITIES

IT skills, organisational skills, able to work as part of a team or alone, dedication, stamina (be prepared for hard work and long hours). Good time management and project management skills are vital. Experience in agriculture and/or horticulture is necessary.

DID YOU DO ANY WORK EXPERIENCE BEFORE JOINING?

Yes, when I was at school I did occasional fruit and vegetable picking on nearby farms. After leaving school at 16, I completed a National Diploma in Agriculture at Sparsholt College, Hampshire [www.sparsholt.ac.uk] This three year course incorporated a one year work placement and additional work experience throughout the terms.

After two years working while travelling in Australia, I returned to join the fresh produce industry in the UK. I gained experience in various fresh produce businesses over the course of three years before joining Watts Farms in September 2013.

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