



Head Gardener – MUNCASTER CASTLE

Contract: Full-Time / Permanent

Location: Muncaster Castle, Ravenglass, Cumbria

Salary: £28,000 to £35,000 per annum (based on a 40-hour week) Dependent on experience.

Hours: 40hr per week. Generally, 8am – 5pm with some evenings for events or specialist access.

Holiday: 28 days per year (including BH's) - pro rata for fixed term.

Accommodation: Onsite or living nearby requirement

Benefits: Good overall package including holiday, pension and a great work/life balance.

Responsible to: Operations Manager

Start Date: Negotiable

Muncaster Gardens:

The Muncaster Gardens include a world-renowned Rhododendron collection dating back to the 184s. A combination of perfect micro-climate, historic owners' passion for gardening and ability to fund plant expeditions led to the gardens becoming nationally significant. The famous 19th century artist John Ruskin described the terrace at Muncaster as 'the gateway to paradise! The gardens now have more than 10 national champion trees (largest of their species) and contains some plants that are now threatened and vulnerable to extinction in the wild making it a particularly important collection. In addition to this it has an apple orchard and a walled Victorian garden both with historical significance and untapped potential.

As Muncaster Castle enters an exciting new phase under the next generation of leadership, we are strengthening our gardening team to better care for our remarkable gardens and share them in fresh, inspiring ways. Our walled kitchen garden has recently been established as a community space open to all, with many volunteering and engagement opportunities. We are now wanting to re-establish the woodland gardens and Castle grounds as one of the leading gardens in the UK, this is a rare opportunity to shape the next chapter of these unique gardens — contributing to a dynamic team working to elevate Muncaster's Gardens to be amongst the best in the UK. Our vision is focused on establishing Muncaster as **Britain's Cloud Forest Garden**. The climate, scale and historic planting make it well suited to this title and role. This is your opportunity to help shape this and confirm



Muncaster as a world class garden in recognition of the increasing importance of Rhododendrons in cultivation in the north west and the threat posed by the drying climate in the famed collections of southern England. Muncaster's fabulous garden has been off the garden visitor's radar for several years – we want our new head gardener to awaken this sleeping giant from its slumber.

General Muncaster Castle Background:

Muncaster Castle is one of the Lake District's most important heritage visitor attractions, set within over 70 acres of stunning gardens and wider estate, with breathtaking views of some of the most picturesque Lakeland fells. The castle itself has been home to the Pennington family for over 800 years, and they remain actively involved in shaping its future.

We have been welcoming daily visitors on a regular basis to Muncaster since 1968 and currently host over 60,000 visitors a year, with an ambition to significantly grow this number. Our mission is to protect and share the heritage and history of this extraordinary place, ensuring it continues to inspire and delight visitors for generations to come.

Our site includes the historic castle and gardens, the Hawk and Owl Centre, The Stables Café, gift shops and The Weapons Hall activity centre. We also host a wide range of popular seasonal festivals and events, creating unforgettable experiences for visitors of all ages.

Muncaster Castle is a Grade I Listed Building. The garden is Grade II* on Historic England's Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest. This is a friendly, family run estate working with an established loyal team through all departments.

The Role

What you'll achieve at Muncaster

The opportunity for gardening at Muncaster spans management and further development of the woodland garden, lawns and ornamental borders immediately adjacent to the Castle, in addition to shaping key outward views of the Lakeland fells. It therefore demands a wide spectrum of experience, horticultural skills and plant knowledge to do it justice.

As the head gardener, you will:

- Work closely with our Gardens Steering Committee to plan out the strategy and delivery of how to establish Muncaster as **Britain's Cloud Forest Gardens**. This includes maintenance, planting and interpretation strategies.



- By developing your knowledge of the history of the gardens and landscape at Muncaster, you'll be able to encourage and deepen our visitors' interest and appreciation of Muncaster
- Proactively support the wider team in supervising and training existing garden staff, new recruits, volunteers, student placements and trainees with a focus on the gardening elements.
- Deliver the best possible experience for our visitors by maintaining excellent standards of presentation and interpretation.
- Enhance your own horticultural knowledge and broaden your horticultural skills through creative, resourceful hands-on gardening, horticultural research and problem-solving.
- Protect biodiversity by safeguarding habitats and adopting sustainable practices throughout the garden.
- Seasonal maintenance of flower borders, shrubberies and kitchen gardens, along with the care of plant collections, including woody plants, trained fruit trees, herbaceous perennials, bulbous plants, and annuals.
- Formative, remedial and rejuvenative pruning of woody plants, including trees, rhododendrons and hedges in accordance with the seasons.
- Oversee the cataloguing and mapping of the existing collection and plant labelling where/if needed with a view to the development of visitor trails, in addition to the curation of the plant collection using plant records to inform decision making, plant acquisition and propagation.
- Design, craft and develop garden tours for visitors to be led by you and (when appropriate) others in your gardens team. For example, focussing on a selection of key/interesting plants and making them accessible via signage and/or digital or innovative technological methods

General:

- Turf care and maintenance
- The use of horticultural machinery, including but not limited to mowers, trimmers, tractors, trailers, hedge trimmers, ATVs and other machinery, including hired-in plant & equipment



- The maintenance of machinery and equipment, including safety checks
- The appropriate, timely and safe use of herbicides and pesticides, whilst providing optimum care for the environment by seeking organic alternatives wherever possible
- Ensure rigorous processes are in place to carry out routine inspections of trees and large plants in relation to the safety of the public, staff and all site users.
- The optimum use and management of composting systems

Encouraging and enhancing biodiversity within the gardens

- As a gardener, you'll take opportunities to broaden your understanding of the natural environment, to enrich and protect biodiversity, by creating and enhancing a range of habitat types throughout the gardens, woodlands and park

Playing an active role in ensuring the efficient operation of the garden team

- In line with our Health & Safety policy, you'll ensure the safety of yourself, your garden team and volunteers by carrying out an appropriate range of assessments to recognise hazards and control risks, including Risk Assessments, Manual Handling and COSHH
- As well as taking part in duty weekend rotas, occasionally we'll need you to help with horticultural operations or events that happen out of hours. These are shared amongst the team, and you'll get time off in lieu for these activities on a one to one basis.
- You'll assist with the accurate recording, cataloguing and labelling of the plant collection
- In a busy 'team' environment, we'll need your help with other tasks as required by your line manager
- You'll undertake day-to-day administration and record keeping

Occasionally we may need to review a job description to incorporate any changes or duties needed for this role as identified by your line manager.



We're also committed to providing equality of opportunity, so if you have a disability, we would be happy to discuss reasonable adjustments to the job with you.

PERSON SPECIFICATION E = Essential, D = Desirable

A team player, able to work flexibly, positively & creatively	E
Relevant horticultural skills, qualifications and experience	E
Experience working with volunteers and community groups	E
Developed and delivered workshops within gardens	D
Full clean UK driving licence	E
Good communication skills	E
Excellent customer service in a public-facing environment	E
A flexible approach to working time and availability for weekends and event days	E
A positive attitude to working in a busy and varied outdoor environment	E
A commitment to teamwork and helping other people	E
A reliable, honest professional with a friendly manner	E
Hard-working and self-motivated	E
A commitment to equal opportunities and diversity in the workforce	E
A desire to learn	E
A commitment to working in the heritage and tourism sector	E
An interest in or appreciation of the historic and natural environment	E

Benefits

- Opportunity to shape and develop a new role within a highly respected independent attraction
- Staff accommodation available on-site or nearby at subsidised rates
- Free on-site parking
- Flexible working environment
- 28 days holiday (including Bank Holidays)
- Pension scheme
- Friendly, close-knit team with a shared passion for heritage and place
- An opportunity to work in and around John Ruskin's ***"Gateway to Paradise"***

Language: English (preferred).

Work authorisation: United Kingdom (required).

Ability to Relocate: Ravenglass: Relocate before starting work (preferred).

Work Location: In person at Muncaster Castle.

To Apply: Please send a CV and cover letter outlining how your experience matches the role to info@muncaster.co.uk