

All in a Day's Work

Emma Chase – Garden Centre Worker

PROFILE

Emma Chase works at Deelish Garden Centre in Skibbereen, Co. Cork. The centre has been there for over thirty years and so is really part of the community. It specializes in rare and exotic plants, which is fascinating (www.deelish.ie).



Images courtesy of Emma Chase

Have you always been interested in plants?

To be honest, not really. I began working at Deelish Garden Centre simply as a summer job and the interest grew slowly. But after several years there I became aware that I really had grown very fond of all sorts of plant life and I wanted to learn more.

What training did you receive?

Well, when I realized that I wanted to work with plants I enrolled in the Horticultural programme at Coláiste Stiofáin Naofa in Cork City. That meant getting up very early each morning and driving up to the city and then back again each evening for nearly a year; I must have been eager. At the end of the course I took the RHS exam and received a certificate of Horticulture.

What is a typical day for you?

Well, that's one of the great things about this work - each day is different. Some days I find myself taking cuttings of various plants; other days I spend potting them up. Of course there is a lot of retail work which means answering all sorts of varied questions about plants and diseases and their cultural needs. You also have

to know the Latin names of literally hundreds of plants. Oh, and when I'm not working with plants I am on the computer doing the accounts for the business.

What's the best thing about your job?

I get to deal with a wide range of plants and a wider range of people. One of the things that I've discovered is that no matter how much I learn about plants, there is much more that I don't know. I think that the same thing could be said of people.

What's the worst thing about your job?

That's easy. Getting on the waterproofs on a cold, wet windy day to get together an urgent order or to complete an outside job that just has to be done, despite the weather.

If you weren't doing this job what would you do?

I would be pursuing art in some form. I don't know whether it would be illustration or photography or commercial art, but I've always had an interest in graphic art.

What advice would you give to someone wanting to do your job?

Just get stuck in. The theory and the study is important, but the most important thing you can do is simply to do it. You will never run out of things to learn.

And finally, what's the best advice about your job that you've ever been given?

Basically, don't worry, be happy. And if you are not happy with your job, you shouldn't be there - find another one.



Above: Conservatory Plants.

Below: Vegetable and flower beds in summer.