



Thank you so much for enquiring about volunteering in the Gardens at Doddington. Doddington Hall is a privately owned House and has never been sold since it was built in 1595. It has been open to the public since 1954 and is owned and run by myself and my husband James Birch. Everything that we do here is aimed to try to ensure that adequate funds are generated to pay for the huge costs of maintenance, repairs, housekeeping, insurance, heating and so on. We have a large team of volunteers who assist in the House opening and also volunteers who dedicate their time to help in the Gardens.

As you may be aware we have lots of exciting new developments, particularly in the walled Kitchen Garden where we are bringing a large area that has been fallow since the 50's into full production again. Our Head Gardener, Jon Lawrance and his team are putting in sterling efforts to create a busy, neat, productive garden that looks beautiful in its own right without a huge amount of ornamentation. We have recently started growing a wide variety of heritage and traditional fruit and vegetables along organic principles all sold through our on-site FarmShop and used in the Café and Restaurant.

We need help with any number of tasks from setting out paths and plots, organising composting, planting fruit trees, planting seeds, weeding, pruning, explaining what we are doing to visitors, harvesting and preparing fruit and vegetables for our Farm Shop, Café and Restaurant.

The entire project has grown out of our passion for home-grown fruit and vegetables; for local, traceable food. I have seen how the experience of discovering where potatoes come from; how delicious a freshly picked carrot or tomato tastes; snapping a sweet-corn off its stem and peeling back the outer skin; can change a child's (or adult's!) attitude to vegetables for ever. We have a unique opportunity at Doddington to share the wonder of growing vegetables and fruit. We also have the chance to demonstrate the benefits of local produce, healthy eating, environmentally friendly techniques and we hope that you will want to be part of this.

There are also lots of opportunities in the Ornamental Gardens. These include care of our fabulous herbaceous borders and irises (featured on BBC Gardeners' World); care of roses, rhododendrons and our wild garden areas which are rich with naturalised spring bulbs; lawn and edging-work, clipping our extensive topiary and box edged parterres.

Please fill in the attached form as best as you can and return it to Jon Lawrance at the address below and we will get in touch with you as soon as possible.

With all best wishes and many thanks for getting in touch.

Claire and James Birch