

Name:

Simon Momper

Job title:

Horticulturist at the Botanic Gardens in Bonn

Career:

After finishing school (when I was 18 years old) I thought of conducting my vocational training in a tree farm, but by chance found the position at the Botanic Gardens in Bonn. Therefore, I decided to work with exotic plants from all over the world. The training took 3 years, partly in school, partly in the Botanic Gardens. Now I am a horticulturist and still work in Bonn, as I received a contract to stay.



Responsibilities:

We have different sections in the Botanic Gardens. I'm working in the Succulent house, one of the two big glasshouses, and in the Carnivorous plant house. We also have a big outdoor area. My working week is very diversified and seasonal. We work from 7:45 am until 4:30 pm. In the wintertime, a typical working day begins with cleaning up the glasshouse, sweeping foliage and tidying up the utility spaces. After that, we do preparatory work for spring and summer, such as preparing our own soil mixtures and substrate for the plants. To disinfect the potting soil, we heat it up to 95°C. I also grow plants by cutting the offshoots of the plants and potting them. Once they have grown a bit, they'll be picked and planted into their own pot. Of course, we already start seeding in the wintertime. In the summer, we have a lot to do with watering and bringing out the plants from the glasshouses. One day per week, I spend at vocational school. The most interesting thing in my job, is to handle the plant diversity, because you have to find out what is best for every single plant species. The Botanic Gardens are a unique workplace, because of the huge plant diversity and the exotic plants, such as those from South Africa or Australia. Having the responsibility to take care of such species, and especially of rare species (sometimes we have only one exemplar!), is very challenging and makes the job even more interesting to me. Our team often takes business trips to other cities, bringing and collecting plants from their own botanic gardens. A few weeks ago, we visited Marburg and the Camellia show at Cologne as well. We also have the possibility to take part in an international exchange of horticulturalists. There are even special funding opportunities for such programmes.

Essential skills in my Job:

- teamwork
- observation skills
- calculation skills
- to investigate in books and online about different plants autonomously
- you should not have a problem with dirty hands ;-)

What I need to know in my job:

- about plants characteristics, healthy growing, propagation and other needs
- about plants natural surroundings
- how to calculate (e.g. the concentration of fertilizers)

Botanic Gardens Bonn

The Botanic Gardens are part of the Rheinische-Friedrich-Wilhelms University Bonn. Some 11,000 plant species are cultivated on its 13 hectares.

Research, conservation and teaching are the main tasks of the gardens; most importantly, they serve to disseminate their information to an increasingly ecoconscious public.



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Horticulturist Simon Momper, Botanic Gardens Bonn



“My name is Simon Momper. I’m 21 years old. I work as a horticulturist at the Botanic Gardens in Bonn (http://www.botgart.uni-bonn.de/o_inter/engl01.php). I’m specialized in shrubs and houseplants. Other possible horticulturists’ specializations include trees, landscaping, vegetable and fruit cultivation and in cemetery horticulture.

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In my job, team working skills are just as important as being able to work self-dependently. Being handy and fit is advantageous. I think it is also very important to have good observation skills, to be able to find out what a plant needs to grow and to stay healthy...and you should not have a problem with getting your hands dirty ;-)

My knowledge from secondary school in reading and arithmetic is very helpful, for example to calculate the concentration of fertilizers. Having learned Latin at school, I can derive names from many plants - such as “succulentus” (fleshy, juicy).”