

A blooming marvellous job

What does your job entail? I am responsible for planting and maintaining more than 20 hectares of landscaped gardens at the Le Touessrok hotel, Mauritius, including about 5ha of beaches.

The hotel is built on outlying islands on the east coast of Mauritius, which largely consist of molten rock. To create the kind of lush, tropical gardens that compliment a hotel of this class, requires careful planning and tons of topsoil.

Establishing and maintaining this bit of paradise keeps a team of 25 dedicated gardeners fully occupied. Because water is in short supply we thoroughly prepare the soil before planting with plenty of compost and a gel that assists in water retention.

We turn all the garden and kitchen waste products into compost, which is used in the upkeep of the gardens. We also have a nursery where plants are propagated for the complex, and a kitchen garden where we grow herbs and vegetables for the many restaurants.

I also do regular garden tours for visitors who want to know the names of the many trees, shrubs and flowers growing here and how to cultivate them..

Average work day: The gardeners start work at 6am, cleaning the beaches and seeing to the plants in those areas before the guests are up and about. The rest of the day is spent in various tasks around the gardens.

Best part of the job: I love

everything about it, but my favourite areas are the Frangipani and Hibiscus islands.

Worst part of the job: There is nothing I don't like.

Why did you choose this career? My father was a planter on the family sugar cane farm and he was also a keen gardener. I spent most of my childhood helping him on the farm and learning all about plants and landscaping in the garden at home. When I left school in 1974 I came to work at the hotel and I've been here ever since.

I was in charge of the landscaping when the hotel was renovated a few years ago and this took 18 months. It was a pleasure doing this with the support of the directors because they provided the resources we needed to create a magnificent landscape.

What else would you have liked to do? I can't imagine doing anything else.

Are you paid enough? I'm satisfied.

Rate your work stress on a scale of 1 to 10: This is a low stress job - around 3. Gardeners get enough exercise and the surroundings are so pleasant that we can expect to live long, happy lives.

What do you do in your leisure time? I spend time on the family farm, and at home I have a beautiful green lawn and plenty of fruit trees.

Travel opportunities? Yes, if you work for a hotel group or other international firm you can travel the world sharing ideas with other landscape gardeners.

