

Social and cultural anthropology
Higher level
Paper 1

Wednesday 16 November 2016 (morning)

1 hour

Instructions to candidates

- Do not open this examination paper until instructed to do so.
- Read the passage carefully and then answer all the questions.
- The maximum mark for this examination paper is **[20 marks]**.

Texts in this examination paper have been edited: word additions or explanations are shown in square brackets []; substantive deletions of text are indicated by ellipses in square brackets [...]; minor changes are not indicated.

Extract adapted from Gieser, T. (2014), “Enskilment Inhibited: ‘industrial gardening’ in Britain”, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, **20** (1): 131–149.

Horticulture plays a major part in the creation and maintenance of urban green spaces in Britain. These green spaces are said to be vital to the new urban design and the creation of sustainable communities. Since the 1980s, local authorities in Britain have increasingly handed over the maintenance of parks and green spaces to private companies as part of a policy to reduce public spending. These companies pay low wages to gardeners, making the job unattractive. A 2004 report found that the skilled gardening workforce is aging rapidly, resulting in a shortage of the number of skilled gardeners and a shortage of skilled trainers for future generations.

I worked full time as a gardener and groundskeeper for a large grounds maintenance contractor who worked in partnership with a local authority. Although there were more than 50 members of staff, only 10 were qualified gardeners. The company claimed on its website to employ only highly-skilled staff, which contradicted the facts.

Nevertheless, in competitions, our parks regularly received gold and silver awards. Many times we were complimented on our beautiful planting schemes. However, both the judging criteria and the visual emphasis of the judging itself have a negative impact on horticultural practice and the training of gardeners. In the important “In Bloom” award, “horticultural standards” only matter for 50 % of the award criteria, the other 50 % being for “environmental responsibility” and “community participation”. It is possible to achieve silver or gold awards with excellent “environmental responsibility” and “community participation” but only satisfactory “horticultural standards”. In one competition, the judges were late (as they often were), and so they just drove slowly past the display and looked at it through the car windows. These flower beds in particular had been expertly designed. However, a closer look would have revealed weeds that had now visibly colonized every bed. The award focuses on the visual aspect of the design, yet no plants were approached and scrutinized. The judges based their judgment on whole patches of plants (beds, borders and lawns), and not on individual specimens.

It is this rather detached practice of judging that paves the way for similarly detached gardening practices. These practices stress the visual and leave less room for the multi-sensory or even holistic knowledge that might turn an unskilled labourer into a true gardener.

There are many different tasks in horticultural practice, such as ground preparation, planting, weeding, watering and pruning*. Each of these tasks needs skill, and the results vary with the level of skill brought to the task. Contract gardeners do their work with some skill but not too much – they tend to generalize and group plants very loosely in broad categories; they pay less attention to individual variations or anything out of the ordinary which could interfere with the routine practices.

Of all gardening practices, pruning is amongst the most skilled and difficult. It requires good plant knowledge as different plants have to be pruned differently and at different times of the year. However, the “industrial pruning” as practised by groundskeepers is not complex and the task is simplified through standardization. Plants are divided into rough groups; at the most basic this would be roses and everything else. Roses should be cut halfway down, everything else at knee-height.

40 Pruning skills were held back by this standardization, for example by neglecting to acknowledge
plant-specific pruning rules and needs. Practices were standardized because management
had to produce satisfactory results with low-skilled staff who worked on their own without expert
guidance most of the time.

45 It is in the context of planting seasonal beddings that I heard the term “industrial gardening” for
the first time. I had started planting flowers carefully and according to good practice. While I did
this the head gardener was watching me, shaking his head. He explained that whatever I was
doing took far too long. We had to plant thousands of plants in a few weeks according to a strict
time schedule, or the company would be fined. He showed me what he meant by “industrial
gardening” by shaking a tray of plants out and planting them rapidly with little regard for the care
50 of individual specimens.

In industrial gardening, parks have to be designed for maintenance by low-skilled gardeners.
They know less and less about plants, soil, weather and climate. Their skills and knowledge are
mainly geared towards tool use and turning plants into material objects rather than skills related
to the environment. In other words, industrial gardening is losing touch with “the garden”.

[Source: Extract adapted from Gieser, T. (2014), Enskilling inhibited: ‘industrial gardening’ in Britain. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 20: 131–149. doi:10.1111/1467-9655.12083]

* pruning: to cut away overgrown branches in order to encourage growth

1. Describe why “industrial gardening” companies employ low-skilled gardeners. [6]

 2. Using theoretical perspectives, explain why low-skilled gardeners are held back from developing their skills. [6]

 3. Compare and contrast the industrialization of horticulture in Britain with an example of economic change in **one** society you have studied in detail. [8]
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