



A Day in the Life of...

Josh Laming, Horticulturist

With a passion for the environment, plants and seeds, Josh is the friendly face you might see peering from the gardens on your next visit to the Zoo.

Josh started as a horticulture apprentice at Perth Zoo in 2005 and after three years as an apprentice he was recently offered – and accepted – a contract as a qualified member of the horticulture team.

"I'm so grateful that I was given this opportunity to learn in a place that has 110 years of botanical history and to gain knowledge from some very experienced and passionate horticulturists," Josh said.

"Every day I learn something new. The flora here is so unique. I get to work with many different types of Australian native plants, as well as species from around the world that match the origins of our animals."

One of Josh's highlights working at the Zoo is being involved in monitoring the growth and habits of terrestrial orchids in the Australian Bushwalk and educating the public about these orchids, which he describes as WA's hidden gems.

And as Josh now knows, there is more to horticulture than just planting plants. The team's plant knowledge was tested during the development of the new Sun Bear exhibit for female Bopha and male Jamran.

"The exhibit had to be landscaped, which is not just about aesthetics," Josh said. "We had to consider the geography, the function of the plants in the exhibit and whether any of the plants would make the Sun Bears sick if eaten. We also had to make sure the plants were appropriate for the Asian theme."

"It was so rewarding to watch the bears roam in their newly built and vegetated exhibit for the first time after we had worked so hard. We have received great feedback from visitors."



A Day in Josh's Diary

Starting at 6:30am, my daily duties can range from maintaining the Zoo gardens (pruning, weeding, mulching, watering and planting), fixing reticulation problems and collecting fallen tree limbs, propagating plant species in the nursery, assisting with exhibit design and even research on plant propagation methods.

We recently developed the vegetation for the new Goodfellow's Tree Kangaroo exhibit and its surrounds, to simulate the species' native Papua New Guinea habitat. My role included sourcing plant species, preparing the area with reticulation, positioning the plants in a natural design, and furnishing the gardens with mulch and 'fallen' logs.

We had phenomenal support in completing the project, through the donation of various plants by the Docents (including some large tree ferns and birds' nest ferns) and five priceless tree ferns from Christian Brothers College after they approached the Zoo to see if we could use them.

Several large logs needed to be moved into the exhibit for the kangaroo to climb and also into the surrounding gardens. Over a dozen people from various sections of the Zoo including keepers, Facilities and Environmental Services and Visitor Services staff helped. They all devoted many hours of hard labour which shows how dedicated the Zoo community is. It was great to be a part of such a joint effort.

The process continues with the maintenance of the plants in the exhibit to make sure they are healthy and thriving.

My day varies quite considerably depending on what is going on in the Zoo grounds but it's great to do what I love in such a beautiful environment.

