



# Chris Gallifent

Level 2  
Arborist Apprenticeship

## ➔ What inspired you to become a Skills Coach, and what do you enjoy most about supporting apprentices?



After more than four decades in the arboricultural industry, I've seen first-hand how much difference the right guidance can make to someone's development. I was inspired to become a Skills Coach because I wanted to give back to the profession that has given me so much, and to help young people enter the Arb industry with confidence and good habits from day one. Watching someone go from unsure beginner to competent, safe, and passionate arborist is incredibly rewarding.

## ➔ What's one piece of advice you always share with apprentices to help them make the most of their training?



I always tell apprentices: "Take pride in learning the right way, not just the fast way." In arboriculture — as in football — strong fundamentals and safe habits are what make you successful in the long run. It's easy to want to rush ahead or compare yourself to others, but the best arborists are the ones who stay curious, ask questions, and learn from every job. I also remind them that attitude counts as much as skill — show up on time, be willing to listen, and respect the people and trees you're working with. If you do that, the rest will come naturally.

## ⬇ What experience and expertise do you bring to your role that helps apprentices succeed in their chosen industry?



I bring 44 years of experience across all levels of arboriculture — from 20 years as a climber, to management roles as a Contracts and Area Manager, and most recently as a Lecturer at BCA College. My hands-on background means I can relate to the challenges apprentices face on site, while my management experience helps me prepare them for real-world expectations and professional standards. Being part of the emergency response team during the 1987 Hurricane also taught me the importance of teamwork, health & safety, and problem-solving under pressure — lessons I pass on to every learner. In addition, my background as a qualified football coach gives me a strong understanding of motivation and communication; I know how to adapt my approach to suit different personalities, whether someone needs encouragement or a firm push to stay on track.

## ⬇ How do you support apprentices in balancing workplace demands with their studies?



I talk over some best practices on how to best manage their time and break the course down into bite size targets which are manageable for them on an in I take a very

personal, supportive approach. I understand the pressures of full-time work in arboriculture — long days, physical fatigue, and the demands of employers — so I work closely with both apprentices and their employers to find a balance. I help them set realistic goals, manage time effectively, and break tasks into manageable steps. Most importantly, I maintain regular contact, so if someone is struggling, we can address it early.

My aim is to create an environment where apprentices feel supported, understood, and motivated to keep progressing even when things get tough. I work on a different basis, working on the different topics each visit including written and practical tasks.

➔ **What achievement—either your own career success or a learner's success—are you most proud of?**



I'm proud of many things in my career, from working on major storm recovery operations after the 1987 Hurricane to managing large contracts safely and efficiently. But my greatest sense of pride comes from seeing my students and apprentices succeed — watching someone who once doubted themselves pass their assessments, secure full-time work, or even go on to run their own business. Those moments remind me why I moved into teaching and coaching: to help people grow, not just as arborists, but as confident and capable professionals.

