

Merlin Trust: Guidance Notes for Reports

All Merlins who have received funding from the Merlin Trust MUST submit a report within three months of returning from their study visit. All reports received on time are submitted to a judging panel consisting of two of the [Merlin Trust trustees](#) who award two annual prizes: the Christopher Brickell Prize for best overall report and the Valerie Finnis Prize for best use of photography. All reports are also made available to download from the Merlin Trust website and as paper copy/digital from two libraries (RHS Lindley Library and RGS Library) so can be linked to on your CV to support your future career as well as used to inform and inspire other horticulturists and plant enthusiasts.

The format of these reports is left up to the Merlin and can take many forms. Please do take a look at the prize-winning reports (marked CB or VF) on the Merlin Trust website for an indication of what an excellent report might look like: <http://merlin-trust.org.uk/projects/reports/>

Report requirements

The basic criteria for a Merlin Trust report are:

- Legibility – the report should be readable;
- Location – it should be clear where you have travelled;
- Purpose – define what you wanted to achieve and why, stating where/what you intended to visit;
- Photographs/text – some images/text explaining your tour should be included;
- Conclusion - did you achieve your purpose? What are the main things you learned and/or how might this affect your career.

More detailed guidance

You should consider the following:

1. Emphasise what you achieved or learned as a result of your study tour and how this might influence or impact on your future career. A final section reflecting on your tour is strongly encouraged.
2. Include photographs and other pictorial graphics as applicable. A photograph speaks a thousand words and can reduce the amount of words you need to or want to write. Photographic reports are acceptable provided that there is some text to explain the images, an introduction (location and purpose) and a section reflecting on what you achieved or learned.
3. Novel formats adopted for the report are warmly welcomed: while a diary approach is acceptable, you might want to consider framing your report around the plants or gardens you visited, your geographic or ecological journey, or even your reflection points. Consider what might be of more interest to other readers/travellers, or as a reference document for you in years to come.
4. While a written report is required, you could link to a video diary, vlog or blog provided that all online content exists for at least three years after the tour has taken place. We welcome mixed media formats and would be happy to discuss your ideas further, particularly if it helps you to develop new skills such as video recording and editing, writing for the web etc.

If in any doubt, please contact the Merlin Trust Secretary to discuss your questions further:
info@merlin-trust.org.uk