Inspiring the Next Generation to Pursue Careers in Horticulture: Strategies for Public Gardens

American Public Gardens Association Conference
June 2018
EVERYONE UNDERSTANDS AND VALUES THE IMPORTANCE PLANTS
... AND THE PEOPLE WHO WORK IN THE ART, SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND BUSINESS OF HORTICULTURE.
WHERE PARENTS AND EDUCATORS ENCOURAGE HORTICULTURE AS A CAREER AND NOT SHY AWAY FROM IT.
WHERE HORTICULTURE IS VIEWED AS A VITAL, Viable, AND DIVERSE CAREER PATH.
WHERE WE BUILD
A STRONGER PIPELINE OF
TALENT TO BOLSTER OUR
INDISPENSABLE INDUSTRY.
Seed Your Future

Our Mission:

Promote horticulture and inspire people to pursue careers working with plants.
Who Is Seed Your Future?
Foundation of Research

Phase 1 – Internal to the industry
  – Industry challenges
  – What they tell people

Phase 2 – General Public (adults)
  – Awareness of horticulture
  – Attitudes about horticulture careers

Phase 3 – Middle schoolers, their parents, their teachers, their school guidance counselors
  – Survey
  – Focus Groups
Phase 1 - Recap

• Biggest challenges in the industry:
  – Skilled labor shortage
  – Shrinking university programs;
    consolidation of degree programs
  – Lack of funding
  – Lack of awareness and understanding

Also collected great messages and ideas about the language to use to describe the diversity of careers in horticulture and the rich rewards they afford.
Phase 2 Research

Phase 2 – General Public (adults)
  – Awareness of horticulture
  – Attitudes about horticulture careers
Phase 2 Data Recap

The general public:
- Small majority is generally aware of horticulture (except for young adults).
- Is either unaware or has a negative perception about horticultural careers.

The view of horticulture is highly positive once people are aware of what it means.
Phase 3

Part A - Quantitative

- Surveys
- Obtain a baseline measure of awareness and perceptions of horticulture and identify key influencers in the decision-making process.
  - 7th-9th graders
  - Parents
  - Teachers
  - Guidance Counselors
Phase 3 – Part B Qualitative

Focus Groups
- 7th and 8th graders
- Parents
- Teachers
- School Counselors
- Testing
  - Words
  - Phrases
  - Imagery
  - Etc.
Career Attributes

Focus Groups

– Do something they are passionate about or really enjoy
– Be creative and see the impact of their work
– Do something that makes a positive impact on the world
Vernacular

Use words that resonate with youth.

When asked to pick their favorite alternatives for the word “horticulture” and “horticulturist,” audiences said they like titles with the word “plant,” as it clearly communicates what horticulture is all about.

Participants also like titles that sound or seem sophisticated, impressive, important or professional.
Horticulture is Weird — Plantology is Cool!
What Do You Want To Call Yourself?
Students - Recap

Students want a career that offers more than a paycheck.
They want to be creative.
They want to impact the world.

Goal: We need to create a favorable perception of horticulture and careers working with plants by increasing public awareness of the positive attributes, benefits and diversity of the profession, especially among youth and youth influencers.
Parents - Recap

Those who are familiar with horticulture have a narrow view of the field. None understand the variety of jobs one could have in the industry.

Parents cast a wider net when looking for information on behalf of their child, conducting online searches, their child’s teacher, people in the profession and local colleges or programs.

Goal: Provide a robust digital presence that serves as a clearing house for information with videos, testimonials, and college and career information.
Horticulture in Schools

While teachers and counselors say their students likely aren’t familiar with horticulture, they were able to name a few ways in which horticulture is integrated into their schools.

- Horticulture or agriculture classes
- School gardens or gardening clubs and classes
- Biology/plant sciences class
Horticulture in Schools

After hearing more about horticulture, teachers and counselors can think of a number of ways of integrating horticulture into their schools.

Teachers’ recommendations include:

• Science experiments
• Math class (measurements related to growing plants)
• School garden
• Impact of plants and horticulturists in the community
Teachers - Recap

While teachers and counselors have heard of “horticulture” not one has encountered a student who is interested in the field. However, after learning a little more about the industry, some teachers and counselors think the field could be appealing to the right students, particularly those interested in:

- Nature and the outdoors
- Food and cooking
- Health and nutrition
- Science and experimentation
- Environmentalism

Teachers want lesson plans and activities to help integrate appreciation for plants into their curriculum.

Goal: Provide curricula, lesson plans, and activities to schools and youth programs.
Campaign Imperatives

- Use words that resonate
- Use messages that describe how horticulture can impact or affect change
- Stress diversity of jobs
- Highlight job availability
- Tell the story with the right imagery and spokespeople
- Give tools to teachers and youth program leaders to help them incorporate into existing curriculum.
Educator Resources

www.Scholastic.com/BLOOM
Green-Collar Careers

Horticulture is the art, science, technology, and business of plants. Look inside to explore this field and the careers it offers.

PLUS: Hear from professionals about what they do and why they love it.
Horticulture offers countless careers. Check out these real-life professionals who spend their days working with plants and keeping the world green.

**Landscape Architect**
Designing outdoor spaces for homes, cities, and businesses is the work of a landscape architect. These licensed pros are trained in horticulture, architectural practices, and urban planning.

**Urban Forester**
Cities need trees, but those trees need more maintenance than the ones in a forest. The urban forester might work for a city government, a utility company, or a tree service company keeping trees trimmed and healthy.

**Florist**
Bringing beauty and delight to people is the work of florists. These pros know their flowers and spend their days designing and constructing arrangements for countless occasions.

**Extension Agent**
An expert and advisor, the extension agent helps people by translating the latest horticulture research into usable information for home gardeners and business owners.

**Drone Specialist**
The green-collar industry is on the cutting edge of technology. Among the many professionals working in high tech are drone specialists. These pilots fly drones to conduct surveys of fields and forests.

**Botanist**
The ultimate expert on plant biology, a botanist is dedicated to examining the power of plants. Botanists might spend their days teaching, conducting research on plants, or advising businesses on horticulture practices.
Lesson Plans
Activities
Contest
Encouraging Careers in Horticulture
Longwood Gardens

Sarah Cathcart, Vice President Education
Would you like a career in horticulture?

Or

How can you have horticulture as part of your career?
Community Read

Read. Think. Engage.
Community Read

- Encourage reading
- Build relationships across organizations and in the community
- Explore common ideas
- Engage audiences around the topics of nature, plants, and gardens
- Widely used format in public libraries to focus on literary topics
- One book, one community
- Highlighting careers in horticulture
School Partnerships
Planted Podcast
A joint project between Education and Science & Conservation at The Morton Arboretum

1. Engage the next generation in tree-science and plant-related topics

2. Introduce the next generation to the plant-related STEM career paths

3. Humanize plant professionals
Horticulture Pipeline
To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow.

- Audrey Hepburn
Getting the ball rolling in a large institution

• Movement
• Challenges
• Progress
Horticultural Training Program “The Pipeline”

3 Goals

- Develop 1-2 current seasonal employees’ horticultural knowledge
- Address deficit with internal talent
- Increase diversity
Horticultural Training Program “The Pipeline”

Eligibility

• Be in good-standing, current permanent or seasonal staff position
• Have enough working knowledge of the English language to complete classroom components and written coursework
Horticultural Training Program “The Pipeline”

Program

- Classroom-based coursework---Professional Gardener 2 certificate
- Hands-on internship and gardening skills development
- Keystone project
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Thank You!

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