

HORTICULTURAL EDUCATION — DOES IT FALL SHORT OF THE MARK?

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Having completed 4 years of college and 2 years working experience, I feel that the best education is a combination of classroom instruction and practical experience. Also, good textbooks are needed for outside study.

As to the question of whether horticultural education is up to the mark, I have varied feelings. Number one, I believe that the university can provide the needed education although there are areas I feel need improving. Number two, the individual plays an important part in the type of education he receives.

Let's look at the university first. A student's education in horticulture should consist of both practical experience and classroom instruction. To give you an idea of the courses offered, I have listed the horticulture courses I completed: Greenhouse Management, Bedding and Foliage Plants, Plant Propagation, Garden Flowers, Nursery Management, Turf Management, Arboriculture, Growth and Development of Horticulture Crops, Weeds and Their Control, Entomology, Plant Pathology, Special Problems, and Plant Material. Scheduling courses can be a problem and for one reason or another I missed Floriculture Crops and Production I and II, Vegetable Crops, Fruit Science, Principles of Plant Breeding, and Home Grounds Development and Construction. A great deal of foresight and help from advisors is needed to work in all the classes one would like to take. In general, the variety and depth of the courses offered, I believe, are sufficient to provide the needed education with respect to classroom instruction.

In the area of practical experience, most all the courses included lab periods and field tours. Here the individual must make the best use of this time to sharpen up on the practical aspects of the subjects studied. Other practical experience can be obtained through participation in Horticulture Club activities and Special Problems courses. Outside the university, summer jobs in a related field would be helpful. I believe this area of practical experience is where most students tend to fall short. This is where the individual plays an important part in his education. It's up to him or her to gather up all the practical experience possible.

Enrollment in Ornamental Horticulture has risen rapidly. When I entered the University of Illinois there were only some 70 students majoring in Ornamental Horticulture. A large percentage had families in the nursery business or worked at a nursery prior to enrollment. That number doubled twice in the 2 years I was there and so did the number of students with little or no experience in the

field. The average classroom has increased in number from 20 to 80 and the student-teacher relationship declined. The result is more graduates knowing a little less about the field than those before.

There is also the problem of professors who have little or no practical experience. There is no doubt they can do a good job teaching, especially if they attend meetings of this type, visit nurseries, and become acquainted with nurserymen and the practical aspects. It's important to have professors who can offer counseling to students with respect to where to look for jobs and what to expect from different types of jobs. I am well aware of the need because I was one of those students with no background in Ornamental Horticulture.

I started college majoring in Industrial Technology and never decided to major in Ornamental Horticulture until the end of my sophomore year. Counseling played an important part in my education and I feel I was well prepared as to what to expect from a job in this area.

I've found my education to be especially helpful in many areas. To a large extent it gave me the background knowledge needed. I have a wealth of notes and books to use as reference materials. With these resources, when failure does occur one can find out why faster and do better in the future.

Through my working experience I've learned many things that could not be taught in the classroom. Greenhouse construction, heating and ventilation, watering technique, scheduling work, and methods for propagating large numbers of cuttings are just a few. Through college education one learns what to do, but its on the job experience that teaches one how to do the job efficiently and well.

In summary, I feel that the university can offer the needed horticultural education. A well-prepared graduate should have a broad background in all phases of horticulture, some practical experience, and counseling on the types of jobs and what to expect.

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It has been said there is no better method for resolving the world's problems than by talking them over in a genuine sincere spirit of frankness and open-mindedness. I'm not certain of the magnitude of our topic, but I do know that it is of great concern to educators, students, and nurserymen from coast to coast. There should be no better place to resolve some of these differences than in this unique gathering of educators, students, and nurserymen.