

# Exploring Career Opportunities in Horticulture

**W**HAT DO YOU want to be when you become an adult? Well, if you like plants, a career in horticulture could be for you. Horticulture is one of the fastest growing fields in agriculture. Growth in horticulture popularity and sales has opened a wide range of career opportunities.



## Objectives:



1. Identify skills needed for careers in horticulture.
2. Describe career opportunities in horticulture.

## Key Terms:



arboretum  
botanical garden  
career  
career goal  
garden center

goal setting  
horticultural garden  
job  
landscape maintenance  
landscape nursery

nursery production  
occupation  
personal skills

## Preparing for a Career in Horticulture

Horticulture careers require an understanding of both science and business. Opportunities in the horticulture industry are plentiful; but to be successful, a person must possess technical and personal skills.

## TECHNICAL SKILLS

People working in horticulture must master a number of technical skills, including plant care, mechanics, and business.

A person must have an understanding of plant needs and plant growth. Plants can be adversely affected if fertilization, growing schedules, cutting schedules, irrigation, and temperature are not adequately regulated. Likewise, insects and diseases can be harmful to plants if crops are not monitored carefully.

Mechanical skills are also important in horticulture careers. Irrigation systems require a general understanding of plumbing, heating and ventilation systems in greenhouses may require work, and basic construction may be necessary to build benches or make minor repairs. Also, understanding how to use, maintain, and repair hand tools, power tools, and equipment is essential.

Business skills are essential for most people employed in the horticulture industry. Marketing skills are also important. Workers must know both the wholesale and retail worth of the product being sold. Administrative skills are necessary for anyone who has employees. A business owner or manager is responsible for hiring and firing employees and assigning tasks. Therefore, skills in handling personnel are needed. People in horticulture careers should be familiar with the legal aspects of business. Local, state, and national laws must be understood and followed to reduce the risk of legal problems. Laws regarding the proper use of chemicals are especially critical to horticulture employees.



**FIGURE 1.** People working in horticulture must have an understanding of plant needs and plant growth.

## PERSONAL SKILLS

A **career** is the direction a person's life takes as related to his or her choice of work. Before choosing a career in horticulture, a person should be involved in horticulture-related jobs or occupations to see if that career is the best choice. A **job** is work a person performs for wages and benefits. An **occupation** is work that has a title and specified duties.

To be successful in a career, a person must be productive and have the necessary personal skills. **Personal skills** are a person's abilities to relate to others productively.

Being successful in a career requires setting and achieving goals. A **career goal** is a level of accomplishment a person wants to attain in a career. Goals can change as a person changes, but goal setting does not. **Goal setting** is the first step in describing what a person wants to do in life.

Education and training are also important in preparing for a horticulture career. A person can receive horticulture training in high school, community or junior college, and college. Education should be related to plant and soil science and to plant structures and functions. Training and education are also available through student organizations, such as the National FFA Organization.

## Careers in Horticulture

Jobs and careers in horticulture can be as employees or entrepreneurs. Employees work for someone else; entrepreneurs work for themselves. Jobs and careers can be in landscape horticulture, floriculture, olericulture and pomology, turfgrass, and other general areas.

### CAREERS IN LANDSCAPE HORTICULTURE

**Nursery production** involves growing plants in containers or fields. Plants can be grown from seeds, cuttings, or grafts. Jobs and occupations in nursery production include propagator, inventory manager, field supervisor, manager, salesperson, sales manager, and shipping supervisor.

The **landscape nursery** industry prepares sites for landscaping and purchases the items needed for a landscape design. Jobs and occupations in the landscape nursery industry include construction supervisor, designer, and salesperson.



### ON THE JOB...

#### CAREER CONNECTION: Greenhouse Grower

Floriculture is a major segment of the horticulture industry, and the production or culture of flowers and foliage (leafy) plants is a big part of floriculture.

The person in charge of the crop production in a greenhouse is called a greenhouse grower. Greenhouse growers are responsible for floriculture crops. They must be able to identify plants and understand needs of plants. Greenhouse growers have knowledge in plant propagation, scheduling of crops, pest management, plant nutrition, and harvesting and handling crops.

To become a greenhouse grower, you need to study floriculture at a community college or four-year university. It is also recommended that you gain practical experience by working at a greenhouse.



## Landscape maintenance

work involves caring for already established landscapes. Mowing, pruning, weed control, and fertilization are all examples of landscape maintenance work. Jobs and occupations in the landscape maintenance industry include crew supervisor, superintendent of operations, salesperson, and manager.

The plants and seeds used by commercial growers come from large operations. These operations can mass produce plants and seeds. Jobs and occupations related to this industry include

plant breeder, propagator, independent grower, sales manager, and salesperson.

The heart of the retail nursery industry is the **garden center**. A garden center offers consumers plant materials and supplies needed to maintain a garden or landscape. Jobs and occupations related to the retail nursery industry include buyer, landscape designer, plant technician, and manager.

Arboretums, botanical gardens, and horticultural gardens offer both job and educational opportunities for people interested in horticulture. An **arboretum** is a natural setting of trees, shrubs, and vines. A **botanical garden** is a plant collection habitat. A **horticultural garden** is an arranged garden that contains a variety of horticultural plants. Jobs and careers related to arboretums and to botanical and horticultural gardens include writer, researcher, propagator, educational director, librarian, director, curator, and greenhouse manager.



**FIGURE 2.** Landscape maintenance work involves caring for already established landscapes.

## CAREERS IN FLORICULTURE

Floriculture involves the growing of floral plants and the production and use of floral products. Examples of floriculture jobs and occupations are grower, production superintendent, marketing manager, and inventory controller.

Wholesale florists sell both floral products and materials used in



**FIGURE 3.** A retail florist shop is a business where people can find floral products.

floral designs. Jobs and occupations related to the wholesale floral industry include manager, buyer, and salesperson.

A retail florist shop is a business where people can find floral products. Jobs and occupations related to the retail floral industry include retail store manager, sales clerk, and floral designer.

## CAREERS IN POMOLOGY AND OLERICULTURE

Production varies according to the crop being raised and where it is being raised. Examples of jobs and occupations in food crop production are manager and field technician.

Marketing is also important in the food crop production industry. Marketing products ensures the best price for both the producer and the consumer. Examples of jobs and occupations in the food crop marketing industry are sales agent and broker.



FIGURE 4. Marketing is important in the food crop production industry.

## CAREERS IN THE TURFGRASS INDUSTRY

Sod production is the mass production of turfgrass. Jobs and occupations related to the sod production industry include farm manager, assistant farm manager, spray technician, and staff leader.

Turfgrass establishment involves a site where turfgrass has already been installed and requires maintenance. Examples of jobs and occupations in the turfgrass establishment industry are construction superintendent and planting superintendent.

Golf course design and maintenance involves workers designing and caring for golf course landscapes. Jobs and occupations related to golf course design and maintenance include golf course



FIGURE 5. Golf course design and maintenance involves workers designing and caring for golf course landscapes.

architect, superintendent, assistant superintendent, irrigation technician, spray technician, landscape technician, and equipment operator.

## Summary:



Opportunities in the horticulture industry are plentiful; but to be successful, a person must possess technical and personal skills. People working in horticulture must master a number of technical skills, including plant care, mechanics, and business. Personal skills are a person's abilities to relate to others productively.

Jobs and careers in horticulture can be as employees or entrepreneurs in landscape horticulture, floriculture, olericulture and pomology, turfgrass, and other general areas.

## Checking Your Knowledge:



1. What are some technical skills needed to be successful in a horticulture career?
2. What are personal skills?
3. What are 10 career options in landscape horticulture?
4. What are five career options in floriculture?
5. What type of employment would someone find in the turfgrass industry?

## Expanding Your Knowledge:



View the Web links that focus on careers in horticulture. Read the descriptions of the career options. List the careers that interest you the most. Then, rank the careers from top to bottom in terms of your interest level.

## Web Links:



### Careers in Horticulture

<http://www.ashs.org/careers/index.html>

<http://txnla.org/about/careers.html>

<http://www.careersinhorticulture.com/>