

A HORTICULTURE OR FLORICULTURE JOB IS AVAILABLE FOR YOU!

by Amelia Taylor, University of Guelph student and AgCareers.com intern

Planting the family vegetable or flower garden each spring may be how you associate the horticulture and floriculture industries; but they consist of much more. Following the grain and cattle sectors, horticulture is the third largest contributor to farm cash receipts in Canada, with over 70% of the sector located in Ontario, British Columbia and Quebec. From field and greenhouse vegetables to ornamental products, honey, maple and potatoes, the horticulture sector provides approximately 15% of all cash receipts in the agriculture industry; providing a wide variety of career opportunities for graduating students.

SKILLS & QUALIFICATIONS

Graduates with an agriculture diploma or degree, as well as non-agriculture related programs such as biology, chemistry, manufacturing, commerce, and food safety are all strong assets when applying for a job in the horticulture sector.

Currently, there is a shortage of candidates with a science and technical background. Technology advancements continue to grow the agriculture industry, and play an important role at **Sheridan Nurseries**. **Jim McLeod**, Sheridan Nurseries' Human Resource Manager, suggests that computer skills are an important asset, "enabling the ability to track products and adapt to business development needs." Sheridan Nurseries is a leading supplier of annuals and perennials to central and eastern Canada, as well as north eastern and central U.S.

Many companies such as Sheridan Nurseries recognize and encourage courses such as the Certified Horticulture Technician Program, which consists of 2,000 hours of work along with a written and practical exam. Many employers will compensate for the program and its continued courses to keep your

training up to date. To enroll in the programs contact the closest Certified Horticulture Technician Association for a list of exam and workshop dates.

Based out of British Columbia, **Terralink Horticulture** is a national leader in providing retail crop inputs to customers across Canada. **Stan Loewen**, Vice President of Terralink Horticulture, sees customer service and computer skills as strong assets to his team. This organization values experience and technical skills, as they continue to grow their business to its fullest potential. Loewen states "the best employees are well rounded individuals."

It is important to keep in mind that many skills and qualifications are transferrable from other industries to agriculture. The horticulture sector is no exception, the job qualifications are not always set in stone. If you have a diploma or degree and the ambition to work in agriculture, then horticulture employers want to hear from you!

WHAT A HORTICULTURE BUSINESS LOOKS LIKE

After graduation you might not be sure what to expect in the horticulture sector. McLeod divides employees into two categories at Sheridan Nurseries: science and commerce.

With a scientific-based background a graduate could find themselves in a performance role, building up to a supervisor, assistant manager, and then promoted to a manager of operations.

On the commerce side, McLeod focuses his employees on the retail aspect of the company. Starting at a retail position or as a product manager then moving to a sales or marketing position and graduating to a store or operations manager. Similarly, Terralink Horticulture breaks up their candidates into two categories: inside customer service and field representatives. They

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- Perennial Foreperson
- Horticulturist
- Product Manager
- Horticulture Specialist
- Operations Manager
- Territory Sales Representative
- Marketing Manager
- Product Development

currently have a high demand for technical, customer service and sales positions.

ADVICE FROM THE EXPERTS

From speaking with well established professionals in the horticulture sector, you would find out that success comes from hard work, transferrable skills and a good education. By joining the horticulture sector you will be exposed to new technologies regarding plant genetics, crop protection, biotechnology and much more.

Terralink's Loewen believes, "Those who embrace jobs in horticulture will have life long opportunities in the sector, once established." He recommends that you, as college and university students, "Have an understanding of the basic sciences in first and second year, which will enhance your understanding of the business and you can gain more experience."

Sheridan Nurseries' advice is to "come and see for yourself." By touring a facility or contacting an employer at a horticulture business you will be able to see their operation and where you see yourself fitting within the organization.

The horticulture sector offers an office outdoors, a friendly environment and a rewarding career for you, the graduate. So, what are you waiting for? A horticulture or floriculture job is available for you!