

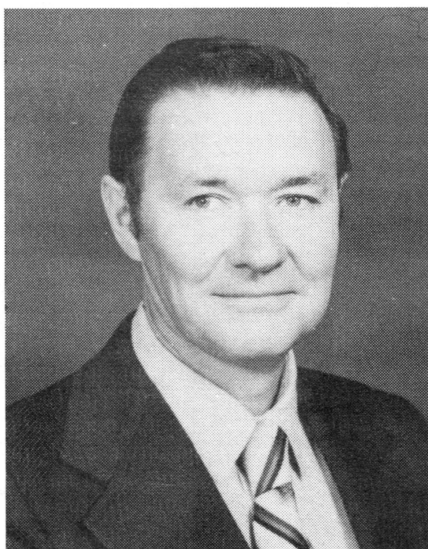
A Bright Future for Horticulture Graduates

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Horticulture production management positions that have been filled by paraprofessionals for many years are gradually becoming available to better qualified men and women with horticultural degrees. Although some horticultural industries had long sought horticultural graduates for their management positions, others have only recently become aware of the larger profits available to them through fewer mistakes made by horticultural graduates. It is true that the young, inexperienced graduate from the various horticulture departments around the country will need to be trained in procedures peculiar to the company that has employed them. In fact, most successful enterprises insist on training their own personnel in their particular operational procedures. However, a basic knowledge of olericulture, ornamentals, pomology, plant growth and development, propagation, genetics, pathology, entomology, soils, nutrition, systematics, and all other segments of horticulture must be obtained through a good course of study in horticulture to prepare the graduate so that he or she may make the contribution needed by industry.

On-the-job training applies to well-established companies. However, as horticultural industry becomes more attractive as an investment opportunity to the novice, it becomes more important that horticultural graduates have the necessary work experience in addition to basic knowledge prior to taking a management position. Those of us in teaching must encourage more of our students from urban areas, who usually have no experience, to take advantage of work study programs, summer employment, and other temporary job opportunities in horticulture so they can qualify for positions where the employer either cannot or will not participate in an initial training program. All horticulture departments could do a



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better job in counseling their students to the necessity of work experience before graduation. The day when most horticulture students came from the farm has gone and we find that they need instruction not only in how to calibrate an air-mist orchard sprayer but how to drive the tractor that pulls the sprayer. The student who takes a common labor position that will provide experience in horticulture will be in much greater demand upon graduation.

A more systematic procedure is needed in making this experience available. Many of the well established horticultural firms are willing to establish one or more "Student Training" positions in their company to be staffed by a horticulture undergraduate to be rotated every six months. The students could gain invaluable experience and the company could have an excellent opportunity to recruit permanent employees already familiar with their operational procedures.

The task of the teaching faculty is growing in the area of recommendations

of former students. How can we give a valid recommendation for a student we have only known as one of the 120 faces that appeared in one of our large lecture sections? The task would be easier if we could teach more sections, but such a procedure is time consuming and costly. In the past we have been able to draw from memory of personal contact with each of our students. In many cases the same instructor taught both lecture and laboratory in his respective course or courses. Since we have been forced to a more impersonal relationship with our students by sheer numbers, a more systematic student evaluation record seems to be in order. A mere letter in a grade book provides no more additional information that can be obtained in a transcript from the Registrar's Office. If each instructor could briefly evaluate each of his students at the end of each course the end result would be a file of great value to the person making recommendations upon graduation.

I look upon the future for horticulture as much brighter than the past. The fact that we have large student numbers will mean:

1) A choice for prospective employers resulting in employment of better qualified students. In the past, and even in the present, the employer has had limited choices. Such lack of competition has limited student incentive for proper preparation. It has also forced employers to hire graduates in other fields. If you will survey the horticultural industries in your state you may be surprised at the extremely small number of personnel who have had formal training in horticulture. Hopefully in the near future we will be able to offer the horticulture industry several well prepared persons from whom to choose for each position they have.

2) Horticultural graduates will be available for jobs outside of our own industry or in related industries which will help build a much broader base of awareness for horticulture. We are often guilty of working so hard on public

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relations among ourselves that we never reach the general public from which our support ultimately comes. It would be a pleasant change to be able to borrow money from a banker with horticultural training, have a greenhouse built by a contractor who understands the requirements for plant growth, or find a produce buyer in a major chain store who knows the difference between a 'Stuart', 'Wichita', 'Elberta', 'Bartlett', or 'McIntosh'. Think how much better qualified horticultural graduates would be for sales and research in agricultural

chemicals than those who have degrees in agricultural economics, agricultural education, or business.

3) The increase in female students has not only raised the overall attractiveness of our students, it means that we are now privileged to work with the other half of the population. Women have taken responsible positions in all segments of horticulture and have done a better job than their male counterparts in most cases. This trend will obviously continue. More and more of these graduates will find their way into

the already influential women's garden clubs across the country. Imagine how much stronger this group will become with more horticulture graduates than ever before.

4) Some of our students will obviously show up in areas far removed from horticulture. This will not be different from history, English, education, or wildlife science majors who become housewives, truck drivers, welders, TV repairmen and insurance salesmen. They will have the basic education from which to build their future.
