

GROWERTALKS

Growers Talk Production

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Experience Is an Asset

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As we cast our fishing rods into the sea of job sites for candidates, I wonder how many potential hires bypass a horticulture sector position in their scrolling. Specifically, I wonder how many people scroll past a growing-related posting, paying it no thought as they consciously (or not) think, "I have no or not enough formal education or experience."

If we changed our job titles from the iterations of "Grower Assistant" to "Aspiring Plant Nerd," does that make it more approachable for fellow newbies? Show me your windowsill plant collection and let's talk about how growing on a commercial scale can be just as rewarding, if not more so!

Related knowledge is a strength, but so are soft skills. Of course, we'd be thrilled to have someone on board that can speak the language from the start. But if we had to choose, we'd sooner geek out discussing why EC is important versus battling a stony know-it-all

attitude.

I want to work alongside, learn from and train individuals who are curious, interested, communicative, humble and open to learning ... regardless of how many years they've been in the business. Freshly onboarded growers still require support and time, no matter the experience level. One may come into a space knowing how to get a genus from A to B, but they still need to understand the workflow of the company, what resources are available to them and what the expectations are. Hello, communication!

"I don't have enough experience ..." I was one of those people! We toured the Qualitree nursery many, many, many moons past (somehow that was only five years ago) while enrolled in the local university's horticulture program. I remember pacing along with the string of students, thinking something along the lines of, "What would it take to be good enough to grow and be meaningful for a place like this? I'm too much of a newbie!" It was amazing and simultaneously intimidating.

Some months later, after getting an out-of-the-blue-job-offer phone call, I actually considered that I could possibly, maybe, do this. I sat on my hands until I came back to job shadow and worked alongside a pool of genuine people who made me feel pretty great wearing my metaphorical "Aspiring Plant Nerd" hat. We've had people come and go since I accepted work at Q, but the ones who tend to stick around and thrive are the ones who never take that hat

off.

It's up to all of us to continuously put the word out that this is a viable, attainable and rewarding career path. When we get a string of students visiting the nursery (not even necessarily from a horticulture program), we love to show the different facets in the business that drive its success. Growing roles aside, there are plenty of other technical jobs that can fold into horticulture.

Regardless, we highlight that creating an impactful, successful career requires a foundation composed of both hard and soft skills. But, honestly, if you're driven and a genuine human being, there's likely going to be a spot for you here. It boils down to this: Be humble, stay curious, be kind and apply your learning.

With how quickly this industry seems to move, standing still ultimately means you're moving backwards. So, first and foremost, search for people that want to beat the pace—experience is an asset, but not the dealbreaker! **GT**

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