

Glemson Horticulture Student Essay

Reflective Essay: The Economics of Native Plants in Residential Landscape Designs

By Alex Burke



As an aspiring landscape designer I look for the aesthetics in the landscape and try to create a focal point for the design. As I read *The Economics of Native Plants* (Helfand, Park, Nassauer, & Kosek, 2006) I was presented with some points that I had never taken into consideration before. The authors state that incorporating native plants can be as attractive, or even more attractive, to homeowners as conventional yards that do not include native plants. In my experiences with client presentations or designing new installs, no clients have ever asked me for more natives over non-natives; in fact most customers don't seem to know very much about plant material at all. This brings me to another point in the research, where the researchers claim that what people consider attractive may not translate into what they would be willing to purchase. In my experience with high end residential design most of my customers are willing to pay whatever it takes to get their landscape

looking beautiful. I have had some customers tell me to do whatever I thought would look the best and to just send them the bill. They don't even ask for an estimate or a price. Perhaps in my future designs and client interviews I could offer two designs, with one incorporating more natives than the other, and see which design the customer chooses. If my clients are willing to purchase these designs at higher prices that have some environmental gains it can be a selling point to other clients and new install jobs.

I think creating more native landscapes that offer higher environmental gains would appeal to a lot of my clients. This paper goes in depth on the research and survey details and concludes that most people are willing to pay for the more aesthetically pleasing and environmental landscape. I will start making these options available for my clients and show them the environmental benefits of each, with natives and non-natives. I believe that more revenue and more jobs can be sold with the environmental friendly label in the design.

Works Cited:

Helfand, G. E., Park, J.S., Nassauer, J. I., & Kosek, S. (2006). The economics of native plants in residential landscape designs. *Landscape and Urban Planning* ,78, 229-240. doi:10.1016/j.landurbplan.2005.08.001

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