

Clemson Horticulture *Student Essay*

From GREASE to GREEN

By Ethan Busbee

Growing up, I came from a Garden of grease and steel surrounded by hundreds of trucks instead of a garden of plants. My father runs a specialized salvage yard, which is where I received a few hard licks and learned all kinds of life lessons including working hard and necessary people skills. These skills and lessons aligned perfectly with the core values of the Future Farmers of America (FFA). The FFA is a national organization that promotes agricultural education and awareness. Under the guidance of a great agriculture teacher and the influence of the FFA I focused on my natural skills and decided that I wanted to be an Ag teacher. It was a no brainer from there. If you want to be an Ag teacher where should you go to school? Easy, the greatest school on the face of the planet, Clemson University! Currently I am a senior at Clemson majoring in Agricultural Education with a minor in Horticulture, and as long as the creek doesn't rise I plan on teaching high school agriculture in the fall of 2015.

Before attending Clemson my horticulture experience consisted of helping with just a few vegetables my dad grew and cutting the grass. After taking my first Horticulture class, I knew I had found another field that peaked my interest. The unique plants and the simple fact of being able to take a seed, plant it, then groom it, and watching it become a beautiful piece of a landscape, just amazed me! As time went on I took quite a few more horticulture classes, and this spring Dr. Vincent had an opening working in the Sustainable Landscape Demonstration Garden, located in front of Lehotsky hall on the Clemson University campus. Naturally I lunged at the opportunity! Luckily I was able to obtain the job. Since taking the job I have had all kinds of opportunities! I have developed a working vocabulary of horticulture terms and phrases-- like 'habit' referring to the pattern in which the plant grows or 'sucker', which is a secondary shoot or a bud that turns into a branch between an existing branch and the main stem. I also have absorbed a large amount of knowledge of the native plants in the garden-- such as pest problems in aster species or the borderline invasiveness of passion vine. I learned to identify when a



plant is unhealthy then witnessed the process that the scientists with Clemson's Plant Problem Clinic go through to identify the problems with the plant, and so much more! Another extended duty of mine is to assist Clemson Facilities with the maintenance of the agriculture quad, which includes spraying, mulching, and every other type of "ing" that is involved in maintaining a landscape! Everything I have learned and have still yet to learn this summer is preparing me for my endeavors as a teacher.

Agricultural educators can teach a vast array of classes, which includes plant sciences and landscape management, both of which I have acquired skills in by working in Clemson's Sustainable Garden. In addition to teaching, an Ag teacher provides a service to the community by providing information and recommendations to homeowners and others interested in gardening. With the information I have learned, I will be able to assist in diagnosing plant problems or refer people to the Plant Problem Clinic at Clemson, recommend native plants that can perform well in the environment while still remaining aesthetically pleasing, as well as demonstrate the physical skills I learned, to give back to the community in which I will teach.