

Clemson Horticulture *Student Essay*

Student Essay: HORT 1010

by Shannon Gallagher



As my first semester as a Horticulture major comes to an end, as well as my Introduction to Horticulture class, I find myself looking back on all the new knowledge I have been exposed to so far, and feeling excited for how much more there is to discover in years to come. I have connected deeply with several topics discussed in Hort 1010, many of them ideas I was familiar with but did not have in depth knowledge about. Of all of the important topics and knowledgeable presenters we had in class, Dr. Bradshaw's presentation of Heirloom Vegetables was one I felt very excited about, and represented many of the goals I have for my life in the Horticulture field. When Dr. Bradshaw came to class on April 12 to discuss how he manages his extensive personal vegetable garden, I was brought back to my childhood best friend's farm in rural New Jersey running amongst her mother's long rows of corn and lettuce plants.

Throughout my childhood, my best friend Caitlin lived on a beautiful plot of land with a large garden, a horse named Casey, and several goats who we called by silly names. I went to Caitlin's home every weekend, and always marveled at her mother's lifestyle, growing her own food, canning and fermenting her harvests, and constantly picking, planting, and pruning her vegetables in her garden. I remember the crunch of the carrot picked fresh from the garden, and thinking to myself how magical this was, eating a carrot straight from the ground, not from the aisles of Bi-Lo. The life Caitlin led was so different than mine, and we lived only a few miles away



My first strawberry :) Photo by S. Gallagher

from each other. During Dr. Bradshaw's presentation he spoke about heirloom vegetables, which are vegetables that come from seeds that have been handed down for generations in a particular region or area, hand-selected by gardeners for a specific trait (D. Bradshaw, Powerpoint presentation April 12, 2016). When he spoke about heirloom vegetables and saving seeds, I was brought back to a conversation I had with Caitlin's mother one day while picking weeds in her garden. She told me how these vegetables were in a way, the same vegetables her mother used to eat, that the seeds that she used had been in her family for decades. I remember feeling so mesmerized by this idea, thinking about how these vegetables we were eating were "family members" of the ones her mother may have been eating in 1970! Dr. Bradshaw's presentation made me feel very nostalgic, but also made me very hopeful for my future.

After Dr. Bradshaw's presentation, I immediately called my mom and told her all about it, and how one day I hope to have a lifestyle very similar to his. Looking at the photos of his vegetable beds and exten-

sive land, I felt inspired that what I hoped for my life was possible, and that like Dr. Bradshaw, I can do what I am passionate about. When he spoke about what he does with his crops, including giving them away to neighbors in need, selling them at local farmer's markets, and donating the money to the Backpack Program at the local school, I hoped one day to be able to do the same. Dr. Bradshaw was one of the only people I had heard speak who personified nearly everything I strived for. After his visit to class, I went home and added another plot to my personal garden, feeling inspired. Later that week, I noticed I had grown my first strawberry in my original garden plot. I was so excited! I am very thankful for the opportunity to have heard from Dr. Bradshaw, and to learn some tips and tools he uses to be successful in his endeavors. I would love to have the opportunity to visit his garden, because he seems like he has so much knowledge that he could pass on, the kind of knowledge you can't find on the internet or in books. In conclusion, I hope one day to be able to use the knowledge I learned from Dr. Bradshaw and apply it to my own life and my own land in order to achieve my dreams.

Shannon Gallagher is a sophomore horticulture major from Pawleys Island in Dr. Vincent's HORT 1010 class.