

Clemson Horticulture *Student Essay*

Internship Experience at Scapes Incorporated in Dallas, Texas

by Taylor Murphy

This summer, I am working for a landscape architecture firm in hot and unusually rainy Dallas, Texas. I've been here for almost two months now and have loved every second of it! This company's projects range from irrigation systems, landscape design, xeriscaping, seasonal landscape color, and hardscaping to pool and water features, landscape illumination, outdoor kitchens, pavilions and gazebos, grass/synthetic grass, and so much more; so this internship has helped open my eyes to all that 'landscaping' has to offer.

Scapes Incorporated is operated by two partners- Russell Gibson and Davey Devlin. Russell is from Zimbabwe, Africa and Davey is from Ireland- so both add an authentic flare to the company that not all other companies have to offer. Scapes Incorporated has two landscaping crews that work for them. Everything else, such as pools, hardscaping, grass, concrete, etc. is subcontracted; which means most of their projects have a third party that do some of the work.

Since the company is relatively small, everyone is my immediate supervisor; which I've loved, because it has allowed me to experience and learn a little bit of everything first hand. I've tagged along with the two licensed architects to sales meetings and when they have to go measure the layout of the house, they taught me how to draw out a plot line for a house, as well as draw to their scale, which is a 1/8 scale and all the plants are drawn on three foot centers (which means the center from each plant to the center of another plant is three feet, but that varies a good bit because of the different sizes of most plants.) I've also been able to do a lot of office work with Diana Crone and learned the "behind the scenes" work. The saying "you have to have money to make money" is so true and Diana has shown me it takes a lot of work to keep track of finances. I've done a little bit of marketing work with Davey, by helping post advertising around town as well as making changes on the website, and take pictures of completed landscapes. Then there is Russell Gibson, who I am extremely grateful for, he has completely taken me under his wing and taught me his tricks of the trade. He is in charge of sales and production, which is probably the hardest job of all, and he still lets me shadow him. He goes to sales meetings in between running from project to project making sure everything is going according to plan; and between that he visits completed projects to ensure the customer's happiness.

I don't have one designated role. In the office, I put together proposals and plant profile packets, as well as prepare invoices and send out bills. I've been dealing with customers and subcontractors directly to set up who needs to be where at what time. I have been drawing designs as well as giving suggestions to others, which I've actually been getting paid commission for too; which is great! I attend sales meetings and also run my own meetings to hear the customers' ideas of their landscapes or to sell a design that has already been drawn.

Finding Scapes Incorporated has been somewhat of a relief for me. As a horticulture major trying to get a landscape architect's job was really intimidating. But after



working with Russell and his group, it has given me the confidence that I can, in fact, be successful in the architecture world as a horticulturist. Just like we've learned in class- a successful, sustainable landscape is all about choosing the right plant for the right place and smart watering. Texas is big on xeriscaping, which translates to "dry-scaping." Although, this method of landscaping can be useful to wherever you are- choosing native plants that thrive in the environment you're in is key to a sustainable landscape, as learned in Sustainable Landscape Design classes Hort 309 and 461. Soil tests and amending the soil is also the first step to any project, as learned in Sustainable Landscape Design Hort 309 and 461. Aeration and ways to avoid compaction, as well as being aware to other areas around the project site is always a must, as learned in my very first horticulture class Hort 101.

In the office, I realized I began to intuitively organize without even thinking. Next thing I know, people were coming up to me asking me questions on how things should be. I also noticed that when I spoke out about my ideas on a design, 99% of the time they were really liked by the customer or architect I was speaking to. Confidence would be the biggest thing I need to work on. I noticed a huge difference in how I spoke when talking to a person I was comfortable with versus talking to a customer who was very demanding and rude- I felt I needed to be better at holding my confidence and composure in any situation. Overall, this internship has been everything I could have ever asked for and I am still learning so much!