

Clemson Horticulture Student Essay

Reflective Essay: Clemson Super Arborists

By Jake Laird



Six thousand trees; and only four men to watch them. Sounds like the beginning of a corny action film, but this story isn't fiction and much more impressive. This week in my horticulture 101 class we had the pleasure of walking around with Clemson University's arborists. As I learned in class, an arborist is a person that plants and cares for trees. When I first heard this, to be honest, I was not enthralled in the least. I mean how hard can it be to take care of trees? But how wrong I was! There are a total of about six thousand trees on the Clemson campus and the four men we met on Thursday are in charge of this army. There is a process these men carry out too, with each tree. A 360 degree walk around, sounding, and the resistograph are all used to assess the health of a tree. And it isn't just planting and assessing their health, these men must also make sure the trees don't pose a risk to the health of students. This fact was probably the most surprising to me. Again, like a lot of things I have learned in this class, it's just something you never think about or appreciate. To think there is a group of people watching all the trees you walk past every day to make sure limbs don't fall on you or trees fall down on you. And if a tree is deemed unsafe, these men take the heat for taking it down, which I guess is just part of the job. To be honest, like I stated earlier it reminded me of action movie I have watched. The good guy sometimes has to take blame for something bad to fulfill their duty and protect the people. But this isn't a movie, it's real life! I now find myself looking at the trees I walk past every day and looking at cut off limbs and the base to look for fungi. Wondering if the tree is safe or healthy. Also, I now see squirrels and curse at them for hurting the trees! It's just funny the things you notice when you are made aware.

Jake Laird was an engineering major in Dr. Vincent's HORT 101 class during the spring of 2013.

Reflective Essay: Beauty is in the Details

By Alexa McCullen



I have learned so much in Horticulture 101 and it has, by far, been my favorite class I have ever taken in high school or college. This gives me great hope for my future classes. Even though I know the material will get harder, I am so interested in this field and intrigued by new information to come that I cannot wait to continue my studies in the Horticulture field. On the same note, during this group project, we had to review a topic we had already learned and then match it to a place on campus. Of course I would learn something new, even by reviewing an old topic! I learned about Clemson's Sustainability Garden, something that I had walked past each time I came to and from class.

Before beginning Horticulture 101, there were things around me that I never would have noticed or even known about. I would walk around campus and think, "Wow, this is a beautiful campus." As I learned more and more in class, I started notice the details that are hidden in the large picture. I notice every fuzzy bud on a magnolia, the way the mulch is laid, the root flares at the trees, and little scars on tree trunks from early pruning. I took notice each day of the trees around my dorm, watching how quickly they went from bare to full bloom, and I was in awe! All of things I see, now, make everything even more beautiful. I can see the life in every plant and the care that has gone into maintaining them. The sustainability garden is only one more example of this. Each time that I pass this space now, I notice it. I notice the name plates and watch each plant as it grows.

This is what I want to do for others in the future. I want to spread an appreciation for the details so that everyone can see the enhanced beauty. I want to continue to learn more and more so that I can find even more things to take notice of. Horticulture 101 has expanded my knowledge and increased my excitement for this field of study and this group project has proven to me that there is always something new to learn, something new to notice, and something new to appreciate.

Alexa McCullen is a freshman horticulture major (who just changed her major to horticulture this semester) in Dr. Vincent's HORT 101 class in spring 2013.