

LAKE CITY COMMUNITY COLLEGE: TRAINING TO MEET INDUSTRY NEEDS

by John R. Piersol, Instructor, Landscape Design and Sales,
Lake City Community College, Lake City, Florida

The horticulture industry has always needed trained personnel. This is more important today as sophisticated technologies and new government rules and regulations increase the complexity of horticultural jobs. For ten years, Lake City Community College has been successfully training students to meet the personnel needs of the green industry.

The Lake City Community College campus is carved out of the pine forests of North Florida. The college, under the leadership of Dr. Herbert E. Phillips, has an excellent scholastic reputation throughout the state. As with most community colleges, most of the 3000 students come from counties surrounding the college. However, students from throughout the country are attracted to Lake City to attend three unique programs at the college: Golf Course Operations, Golf Course Equipment Mechanics, and Landscape Design and Sales.

Golf Course Operations — The Golf Course Operations Program, as the name implies, is not a general turf program, but a curriculum that is designed to train students for golf course management positions. This nationally recognized program has many successful graduates who are now hiring recent graduates as their assistants. The specific emphasis on golf course operations and the tremendous industry support has made the program one of the best in the country. Three full years of study are needed to complete the program which includes one year of mechanics training, general background courses in plant science and pest control, and specific courses in golf course management.

Two summers of required on-the-job training (OJT) are an important part of the program. The summer training sites are located within a 500-mile radius of Lake City. The staff has developed a rapport with many golf course superintendents throughout the Southeast, so students are easily placed on many outstanding golf course facilities.

The OJT program at Lake City differs in important ways from similar programs at other schools. A golf course superintendent's attitude toward education is considered before his golf course is selected as an OJT site. This insures a positive training atmosphere. The students submit requests specifying golf course facilities and geographic areas they desire for summer training. Then the staff matches the requests with a golf course environment known to provide good training. Students are discouraged from returning to golf courses at which they were previously employed, at least for the first OJT. This rule forces students to learn new methods of golf course maintenance and personnel management.

During the summer, the instructors travel throughout the Southeast evaluating student progress at each training location. This gives the

The first in a series of articles on educational programs established for the various horticultural professions. Two-year and four-year programs will be included. Instructors of such programs are invited to write *Weeds Trees & Turf* about their program. The hope is to compare different programs to judge curricula, the significance of two-versus four-year programs, and the importance of on the job training.

staff a chance to talk with the student and the employer to evaluate the learning environment. Each site is visited twice, each time by a different instructor. This summer travel has the added benefit of exposing instructors to new materials and methods used in the golf course industry. Students earn while they learn since they are paid by the employer and receive 12 college credits for their summer training. Their summer grade is determined by a required comprehensive report, by an employer evaluation, and the two on-site instructor evaluations.

Although the school is located in the South, many students come from northern states. In fact, some graduates return north to accept jobs. Both cool season and warm season grasses are taught, so a northern transition is not difficult. Also, many students go on OJT in the northern parts of the Southeast where they get practical experience on both bermudagrass and bentgrass.

Golf Course Equipment Mechanics — The Golf Course Equipment Mechanics program requires just one year of training with excellent job opportunities. Students learn diesel mechanics, hydraulics, painting, welding, sharpening and grinding, gas engine repair, as well as maintenance procedures on various types of golf course equipment.

An important aspect of this program is the emphasis put on shop organization and inventory control. These concepts are essential to the efficient operation of any maintenance facility. Students learn how to keep equipment maintenance records, how to properly order replacement parts, and how to establish an inventory of frequently used parts.

Hands-on experience is an integral part of this program. The curriculum includes both lecture and laboratory periods. During the labs, students work on actual golf course equipment supplied by the school, by nearby golf courses, and by turf equipment distributors. Summer classes include week long training sessions at various equipment distributors where students get an opportunity to work with experienced mechanics.

The tremendous industry demand for mechanics far exceeds the number of mechanic students. This situation provides a lucrative job

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market for graduates of this program. With the increased sophistication of golf course equipment, and the resultant increase in prices, the need for trained mechanics will continue to grow. Last summer, each mechanic graduate had several job offers with starting salaries ranging from \$4.00 to \$6.00 an hour. Any student interested in mechanics should take a good look at the Golf Course Equipment Mechanics Program which provides an excellent return on a student's educational investment.

Landscape Design and Sales — Landscape Design and Sales is a two year program. What used to be a general horticulture program was changed two years ago to emphasize more design and sales. The curriculum includes general plant science courses, pest control, specific courses in landscape installation and maintenance, landscape design, interiorscaping, and business courses. Changes were made with industry input so that the curriculum would train the types of personnel the landscape industry needs.

Two summers of on-the-job training are an integral part of the Landscape Design and Sales program. Ideally, students get installation and maintenance experience on their first OJT and design experience on the second OJT. This is a logical split, but summer training is customized to meet the specific needs of each student.

Other unique aspects of the Landscape Program include required fall and spring tours during the senior year. Outstanding facilities in South Florida are visited during the fall tour, and Central and North Florida facilities are visited in the spring. These tours provide students and instructors with an opportunity to ask questions of successful Florida horticulturists and to observe various techniques of landscape installation, maintenance, and design.

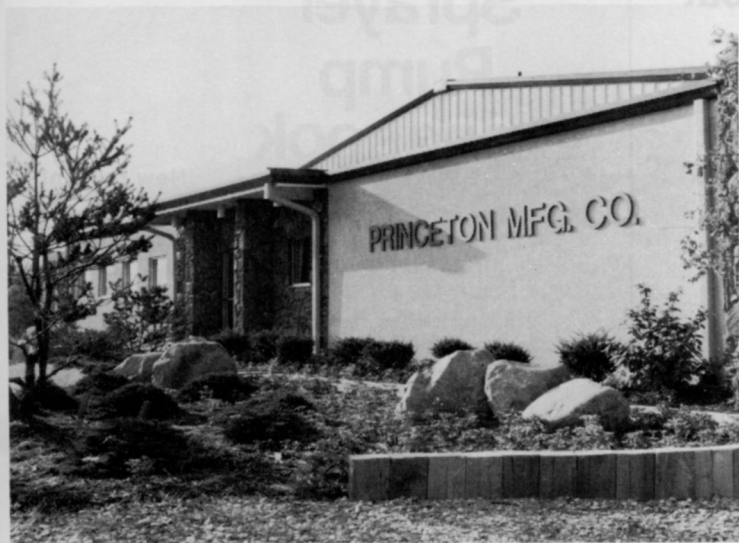
Many green industry professionals are brought on campus to take part in a senior seminar course and to assist in Advanced Landscape Design. The idea is to expose students to a variety of landscape concepts as presented by various practicing horticulturists.

Existing department facilities that strengthen the Landscape Design and Sales Program include modern greenhouse facilities, a spacious drafting laboratory, and a half acre arboretum. There are presently plans to add an additional acre to the arboretum which confirms the staff's desire to constantly improve existing facilities.

Anyone interested in Golf Course Operations, Landscape Design and Sales, or Golf Course Equipment Mechanics should contact:

Jerry H. Cheesman,
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