

Key 19. Take a break. You have worked hard, used your skills and keys well to produce an excellent crop. Remember it is of extreme importance to take time out now, to diligently refresh and replenish yourself. Many a diligent operator fails here because they overwork and loose their sharpness.

Key 20. Continue to seek and share and learn all you can.

If you are an I.P.P.S. member thank you for joining our Society. I hope I may have a chance to meet with you one day and share with you the wonders of propagation. If by some chance you are using this article as a reference and are actively engaged in propagation and not a member please take my invitation to join.

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Human Issues in Horticulture®

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INTRODUCTION

Human issues in horticulture involve refocusing research from the traditional areas of the mechanisms of plant growth and the production and maintenance of crops to understanding of the humans who produce and utilize the plants, the role that plants have in life quality, and the application of horticulture to all aspects of daily life. It has only been in the last 25 years that a significant amount of research has been accumulated in this aspect of horticulture. Research from a number of areas, including environmental psychology, urban forestry, horticulture, landscape architecture, and health care is causing professionals and policy makers to consider the role of horticulture in human life quality. Professionals associated with urban issues working in such areas as housing, public policy, community and economic development, policing, education, sanitation, and public health are beginning to recognize and promote benefits that urban forestry/horticulture can provide. For the purpose of this paper the study of human issues in horticulture has been divided in to the following areas: physical environment modification, urban revitalization and economic development, human health and well being, human culture and evolution, education, and horticulture industry issues.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT MODIFICATION

This includes improvements to urban air quality, water quality, heat reduction, and wildlife habitat that have all been documented and quantified to some extent. In addition, environmental remediation or clean-up continues to be of vital and direct economic and life quality benefit with plants helping solve many of our urban problems such as brownfields, waste-water treatment, storm-water management, and carbon sequestration.

URBAN REVITALIZATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Issues that have received attention from researchers includes such issues as the impact of plants on the profitability of businesses in revitalized districts, increased real estate values, the role plants play in tourism and recreational sites, and the economic impact of horticulture businesses such as nurseries and landscape maintenance firms.

HUMAN HEALTH AND WELL BEING

These have been documented to be enhanced by plants and gardening in many different ways from crime reduction to physical and mental health, a fact which has tremendous economic implications for individuals, communities, and medical systems. Research indicates that plants play a significant part in the reduction from stress, increased life satisfaction, and recovery from health problems. Healing landscapes and horticultural therapy have become increasingly viable and researched fields of study. There is strong indication that urban greening is highly successful in building communities and reducing the public health hazards associated with isolation, loneliness, and lack of community ties. In addition, community gardens are associated with increased food security and food quality. Horticulturists have become particularly involved in understanding the impact of food on health and addressing ways to enhance this impact. In developing countries, a major need has long been identified but still neglected by horticulturist to understand the social as well as cultural aspects of local food production and consumption from a farming-systems approach, thus enhance potential impacts of food production efforts.

HUMAN CULTURE AND EVOLUTION

Plants directly impact on our environment and the gardens that we grow, since the earliest known humans. Plants traditionally are associated with food production and are seen as key factors in the valuation of civilization from the perspective of agricultural domestication of food crops. However, an understanding of the role of plants in our culture cannot be limited to the view of meeting primarily physical and economic needs. Through research we are gaining insight into how plants provide a cultural continuity through our traditions and ceremonies as well as have strong linkages to the evaluation of our philosophies and fine arts. Sociologists, anthropologists, artists, historians, and other professionals are beginning to explore the people-plant relationship to gain a better understanding of our humanity.

EDUCATION

Issues encompass a diversity of topics related to horticulture including the use of the garden as a tool for environmental awareness and across-the-curriculum, teaching in K-6 schools, optimum techniques for university-level horticulture courses, and Cooperative Extension Master Gardener training. On the one-hand, the changes in learning styles and opportunities resulting from computer technology are forcing traditionally hands-on course teachers to understand their students and adapt teaching accordingly. On the other hand, research is beginning to indicate that gardens in public schools can serve as effective tools for motivating student learning in many subjects because it is a hands-on experience.

HORTICULTURE INDUSTRY ISSUES

Industry issues of greatest impact today are frequently centred on human factors such as employee training, retention, and workplace health or marketing issues such as consumer preference and motivation. An industry issue directly impacted by knowledge and understanding of the consumer is expansion into new marketing areas of value-added food crops such as organically grown fruits and vegetables, genetically engineered (GE) crops for enhanced health benefits, or GE-free crops. Farmers market, pick-your-own, and community-supported agriculture are other alternative marketing schemes being explored by agricultural economists and horticulturists. On-site tourism to expand profit includes garden/farm stays, greenhouse/orchard tours, and special events such as the “maize maze”. Legislation and consumer preference are combining to increase the demand for environmentally friendly landscape plants that will not be invasive and are easy to maintain with little inputs of chemicals or energy.

REFERENCE WEBSITES

Relf, D. People Plant Council. <<http://www.hort.vt.edu/human/human.html>>.

Kuo, F.E. and W.C. Sullivan. Human-Environment Laboratory [A multidisciplinary research laboratory dedicated to studying the relationships between people and the environments they inhabit]. <<http://www.herl.uiuc.edu/>>.

New Urban Agriculture Task Force Report. Urban and agricultural communities: Opportunities for common ground. < <http://www.cast-science.org/urbanagricultural/>>. This report considers the changing role of agriculture in urban settings. The report frames “urban agriculture” in both historical and contemporary American society, providing a picture of geographic, demographic, and economic changes in rural and metropolitan life. Policy issues such as land preservation, alternative market opportunities, sprawl, taxation, and food security are considered. Research and education challenges are presented for consideration by those at institutions of higher education, including land-grant universities (20 May, 2002).