



Cuyamaca College
Ornamental Horticulture
Advisory Committee Meeting
Tuesday, January 25, 2022
6:00 – 7:30 p.m.



Advisory Committee Members:

Hannah Gbeh – Executive Director, San Diego County Farm Bureau
Corey Hansen – Sales Rep, Western Region, FoxFarm Soil & Fertilizer
Lorraine Kelley – Production Manager, Native West Nursery
Ron Matranga – Consulting Arborist, Senior Acct. Manager, Atlas Tree Service
David Ross – General Manager, Walter Andersen’s Nursery, Poway
Marie Gregory – Owner/Operator, Poway Country Florist
Larry McLemore – Dean, Career Education, Cuyamaca College
Leah Rottke – Program Coordinator, Ornamental Horticulture, Cuyamaca College
Sarah Roberts – CCBS President 2021-22, Ornamental Horticulture, Cuyamaca College

Meeting Minutes

- I. **Introductions** – Attendees: Hannah Gbeh, Lorraine Kelley, Marie Gregory, Ron Matranga, Sarah Roberts, David Ross, Leah Rottke introduced themselves. Each attendee described their current employment and/or course of study. Hannah Gbeh agreed to serve as committee chair for another term.
- II. **OH Program Update from Leah** – The OH Senior Technician position has started the recruitment process; this should be completed before March 8th. OH course offerings are returning to campus, both lectures and labs for Spring 2022. Enrollment has declined, with three sections cancelled already. The OH nursery has stock and employees, but the new point-of-sale system is not connected to district accounting yet. Re-opening of the nursery is critical to the health of the OH program, but continues to be delayed. OH has had an initial meeting with the Water Conservation Garden to begin planning Spring Garden Festival for Spring 2022; a scaled down event, compared to pre-pandemic years, for the OH nursery is anticipated. The CCBS Scholarship banquet will be held at the Water Conservation Garden on May 19th.
- III. **Green Industry Employer Perspectives**

Ron Matranga: Demand for tree care services is robust, driven by both liability concerns and desire for improved aesthetics. Atlas’s workforce could add 6 to 10 more employees presently and has still not recovered to pre-pandemic staffing levels. The combination of new hires, but with continued resignations are a factor, “personnel recycling”. Highest skilled employees are making \$30/hr. Atlas is seeing a shortage of entry-level candidates. Ron also serves on the ASCA board and mentioned that attendance at in-person seminar events is strong. Most certified professionals are in need of CEUs.

David Ross: Walter Andersen’s Nursery, Poway is also dealing with a shortage of entry-level employees. Shortages of materials caused by the supply chain disruption is also affecting business. Consumer demand is very high, with the past two years seeing the strongest sales increases ever. This is especially true for fruit trees and vegetable plants. David mentioned a call-in gardening radio show and offered to have Leah speak about the current enrollment challenges for OH.

Marie Gregory: Floral design is seeing a shortage of trained designers. Although demand for floral products is high, many retail florist shops have closed since the start of the pandemic. Some floral designers have moved their place of business to their homes and are pursuing studio and event work. Some larger floral design companies are using cross-nation recruitment tactics to try to hire more trained designers. Marie mentioned that pay-rates for floral designers still remain low compared to other sectors of horticulture.

Lorraine Kelley: Native West Nursery has staffing challenges, especially cycling through entry-level employees (“revolving door”). The nursery has tried several different types of recruitment methods. Supply chain disruptions have effected materials stocks and also equipment maintenance, for lack of parts. Demand remains strong, with the nursery’s best sales year in 2021.

Hannah Gbeh: The local agriculture industry has rebounded and had a banner year. Customer demand is greater than production ability, because the labor shortage has “gone from bad to worse.” Local farmers have seen abuse of the pandemic-era unemployment benefits and are engaging in international recruitment efforts to deal with the shortage. Our local agriculture industry has responded to the pandemic with innovation, so that even with a marked decline in acres in production, gross revenue has improved because of increased crop values.

Sarah Roberts: Sarah prefers in person classes but thinks that fellow students who want online classes choose that option for convenience (not having to drive to campus, etc.), as opposed to fear of the virus.