

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission

TITLE: Lead Horticultural Support Technician GRADE: 18 DATE: 1/19/2024
SERIES: Horticultural Support CODE: 2365 EEO: Technician FLSA: Non-Exempt

Class Definition:

Under direction, leads and performs complex, skilled technical horticulture support work to grow and maintain plants in Commission parks, landscape areas, gardens, office buildings, displays and in other facilities. Designs complex seasonal and permanent flower and garden displays including plant and display layouts. Functions as a crew leader that is responsible for directing the work of a small crew assigned to perform landscape, grounds maintenance, and horticulture assignments. As an individual contributor, researches and selects plants by coordinating height, color, texture, peak performance, orders plants from greenhouses and vendors in time for growing schedules and planting deadlines and prepares planting beds by amending garden soil, rototilling, grading, spading and fertilizing soil to promote plant growth and prevent drainage problems; or assumes a lead role in maintaining greenhouse or nursery areas including planning, scheduling and growing specialized crops for year-round, outdoor and indoor displays. Leads the planting, transplanting, and cultivating of trees, shrubs, perennials, annuals, and other plants; utilizes topiaries with conservatory designer, topiary builder and other design/display shop staff. Monitors greenhouse and conservatory temperatures, humidity, and moisture levels, as well as heating equipment and other environmental conditions; maintains and follows crop schedules. Fertilizes, prunes, trims and waters; weeds, rakes and clears ground; and mulches plant beds. Operates various equipment and Commission vehicles (mower, trimmer, tractor, truck, auger, front-end loader) to maintain facility grounds and performs preventive maintenance and minor repairs on equipment. Completes and maintains records in accordance with the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) and local jurisdiction requirements for the application of pesticides. Communicates with stakeholders on changing status of crops and fills orders to meet customer's specific requests and deadlines. Work consists of varied activities on which to act is obtained through investigation, research, tests, extensive calculations or use of standard mathematics, or other means to ensure high accuracy. Information must be developed, classified, and analyzed to determine significance. Applies considerable knowledge of, and skill in, horticulture and landscape principles and practices; Integrated Pest Management (IPM); plant and soil nutrient management, plant pathology, botany, plant taxonomy, arboriculture, forestry and biology; county, state, and federal horticulture and landscape industry standards and guidelines; and equipment and tools used in landscaping and pesticide application. Independently performs various types of analyses and solves conventional, non-standard and challenging problems to ensure accuracy, adequacy and effectiveness in assigned functions. Interacts with people inside and outside the organization, to exchange information, coordinate, instruct, guide, advise and obtain agreement or compliance or achieve other desired actions; or involves incidental contacts with the public. Performs other duties, as assigned.

Assignments are made in terms of functional responsibilities. Incumbent independently plans the responsibilities of work programs and ensures work is carried out in conformance with established policies and procedures. Keeps the supervisor informed; resolves problems or deviations referred by subordinates or management by selecting and applying the appropriate guidelines; and brings challenging and highly sensitive problems to the supervisor for guidance or resolution. Work is expected to be effective – the incumbent is held responsible for results; work is evaluated in terms of quality, quantity, timeliness, teamwork, customer service and such other factors as use of skill and ingenuity in overcoming technical and non-technical problems.

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Examples of Important Duties:

1. Leads the work of staff engaged in maintaining parks, gardens, specialty horticultural facilities (e.g., conservatory, greenhouse), and other landscaped areas. Discusses work to be performed with supervisor; monitors work in progress and provides technical assistance to crew; and directs corrections and modifications, as appropriate. Trains and instructs new and less experienced staff in proper work methods (i.e., use of tools and equipment, safety precautions and techniques). Participates in the selection of staff or volunteers and provides input into employee performance evaluations. Completes assignments individually or as leader of a work crew. Keeps supervisor informed of status of work and problems or unusual circumstances.
2. Performs complex gardening and landscaping work for the care and maintenance of Commission parks, public gardens or landscaped areas of buildings and facilities. Prepares planting beds by amending garden soil, rototilling, grading, spading and fertilizing soil to promote plant growth and prevent drainage problems. Leads the planting, transplanting and cultivating of trees, shrubs, perennials, annuals and other plant materials. Ensures the completion of plant maintenance including fertilization, pruning, trimming and watering; participates in weeding, raking, clearing grounds and mulching plant beds.
3. Cleans and maintains water pumps, pools, fertilizer tanks and hoses. Monitors greenhouse and conservatory temperatures, humidity and moisture levels, as well as heating control equipment or systems and other environmental conditions. Maintains and follows crop schedules; grows and maintains plants through daily watering, pruning, fertilizing, staking, dividing and weeding. Performs quality control measures and communicates with stakeholders/crop requestors on changing status of crops. Conducts research on best propagation methods for a variety of plant material. Ensures propagation areas are developed and maintained to germinate and provide rooted cuttings.
4. Develops general design plans for landscaping and gardens at a variety of Commission sites (i.e., researches and selects plants by coordinating height, color, texture, peak performance; orders plants from greenhouse and vendors in time for growing schedules and planting deadlines); Designs and coordinates the installation of complex outdoor or indoor displays which include extensive horticultural and interpretive theme developments, custom made forms and hardscapes and interpretive materials. Ensures paperwork is completed, permits obtained, and crop deliveries coordinated as necessary. Conducts inspections; complies with Federal, State or County permit conditions. Trains staff on required procedures and practices, and ensures compliance. Assists in construction and installation of props and hardscapes in displays; consults with and advises park staff on plant selection for park sites.
5. Ensures soil health is maintained, tests conducted, and results analyzed. Provides consultation to identify ways to improve soil quality; develops solutions to turf-related issues and problems. Takes lead role in managing soil waste to produce stable, usable compost and recyclable biproducts.

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6. Applies principles of integrated pest management (IPM) for optimal plant health. Observes plant growth, diagnoses diseases, identifies insects, abiotic factors (e.g., sunlight, precipitation, minerals, soil) and other plant problems and determines effective treatments. Determines proper watering, fertilizing, spraying and pruning schedules; appropriately mixes and applies fertilizers, instructs crew in application of sprays and fertilizers; and maintains records of fertilizers and pesticide chemicals used in accordance with the requirements of the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) and local jurisdictions. Tracks data on parasites, diseases, and damaging insects and ensures reporting of status to stakeholders, including crop requestors.
7. Implements tree care programs, such as pruning, de-staking, mulching and weeding. Directs the digging of plant materials and filling of tree requests. Plans, coordinates and directs grading, seeding or sodding, and wildflower meadow installation and maintenance. Implements reforestation and habitat restoration projects. Responsible for maintaining turf areas and irrigation systems. Establishes production schedules; responsible for maintaining inventory system of all field nursery trees. Assists customers with orders and reservations. Receives and picks up orders, purchases supplies and materials, originates purchase orders, processes invoices and interacts directly with vendors. Maintains plants, trees and crops; reserves, prepares and loads balled and burlapped trees.
8. Operates mowers, tractors with and without attachments, front end loaders, snowplows, trucks with and without trailers, equipment for digging and planting trees, dump trucks and other equipment to maintain facility grounds or deliveries; utilizes a variety of hand and power tools used to perform maintenance work. Performs preventive maintenance and minor repairs on assigned equipment and reports the need for major repairs and maintenance, as required.
9. Identifies plants by common and scientific names. Orders labels and places on or near plants to identify them for the public; develops interpretative signage for gardens, as required. Conducts workshops, demonstrations, lectures, and tours for the public and staff. Answers questions and discusses inquiries with visitors.
10. Researches and evaluates materials to be purchased and provides recommendations. Reviews product catalogs and meets with vendors to obtain price quotes; prepares purchase requests. Prepares bid specifications and oversees the work of contractors. Utilizes work management system database to enter and retrieve data; and writes standard reports and correspondence, as required.
11. Assists in snow removal and performing semi-skilled trade work in building retaining walls, steps, paths, and other landscape structures, as required. Coordinates and interacts with trade shops, exhibit shops, vendors and regulators.

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Important Worker Characteristics:

- A. Considerable knowledge of, and skill in (1) horticulture and landscape principles and practices; (2) principles of greenhouse, conservatory, and nursery operations, nursery field production, and plant production; (4) Integrated Pest Management (IPM); (5) plant and soil nutrient management, plant pathology, botany, plant taxonomy, arboriculture, forestry and biology; (6) county, state, and federal horticulture and landscape industry standards and guidelines; (7) equipment and tools used in landscaping and pesticide application; (8) turf and irrigation maintenance techniques; and (9) Commission organization, policies and procedures*.

**Typically acquired or fully developed primarily after employment in this job class.*

- B. Knowledge of, and skill in assigning or reviewing tasks, setting the pace, and otherwise assisting the supervisor by performing group leader work or ability to rapidly acquire knowledge and skill set.
- C. Skill and ability to (1) understand key aspects of park surveying pertinent to Commission planning projects; (2) perform horticultural and landscape design and project management methods and techniques such as developing general design plans for landscaping and gardens and preparing planting beds by amending garden soil, rototilling, grading, spading and fertilizing soil to promote plant growth and prevent drainage problems; (3) operate gardening/landscaping tools, including hand and power tools (e.g., trimmers), tractors, mowers, front-end loaders, snowplows, dump trucks and other work-related equipment in a safe and effective manner; (4) build retaining walls and other landscape structures; (5) apply fertilizers and pesticides; (6) recognize and treat common plants, plant diseases, insects and pests; (7) identify a wide variety of flowers, trees and shrubs; (8) apply safe work practices used in gardening and landscaping work, including the use of personal protective equipment; (9) apply budget management and purchasing techniques; (10) lead a group of employees and train and instruct them in proper work methods of landscape and plant maintenance; and (11) perform first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and automated external defibrillators (AED).
- D. Skill in problem solving to select, organize and logically process relevant information (verbal, numerical or abstract) to solve a problem. This includes skill in identifying subtle aspects of problems and making recommendations and decisions. Examples include applying principles to solve practical problems; designing complex outdoor and indoor plant displays; establishing plant production schedules for nursery or greenhouse crops; maintaining inventory system for nursery trees; surveying parks, gardens and other Commission facilities to determine landscaping needs; installing and designing botanical displays; preparing requests for purchases and overseeing work of contractors; reading and understanding pesticide warning labels and applying basic mathematics to mix and apply in accordance with safety standards; analyzing results of soil tests to identify ways to improve soil quality.

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- E. Skill in communication to understand verbal and written information (including facts, assertions, and arguments), draw inferences, form hypotheses, and develop logical arguments, and to express such information so that others will understand and agree or comply. Examples include interacting with vendors to order and deliver products on-time; notifying stakeholders of status of plant deliveries; creating and delivering presentations to the public; conferring with supervisor regarding projects and assignments; providing courteous service to patrons and answering incidental inquiries; writing routine reports and correspondence; interpreting plans and diagrams; and reading blueprints to build retaining walls, steps, paths and other landscape structures.
- F. Interpersonal skills to interact effectively with contacts in a businesslike, customer service-oriented manner; this includes skill in establishing and maintaining effective working relationships, working as a member or a leader of a team.
- G. Skill in using a computer, modern office suite software (such as MS Office), enterprise software and specialized software; such as electronic management system (EMS).

Minimum Qualifications (MQs):

- 1. Associate's Degree in Horticulture, Arboriculture, Forestry or any related field.
- 2. Four (4) years of experience in landscaping, gardening, greenhouse, nursery or horticultural support work including leading a crew of workers.
- 3. An equivalent combination of education and experience may be substituted, which together total six (6) years.
- 4. Valid driver's license in accordance with both State and Commission rules and regulations. Driver's license must be unencumbered by restrictions, revocations, suspensions, or points that could limit the employee's ability to drive Commission vehicles or perform driving duties required by the position of assignment.
- 5. Contingent upon area of assignment, some positions in this class may require within 12 months of placement in the position: (a) Commercial Driver's License (CDL) with appropriate endorsements; (b) Maryland Department of Agriculture Pesticide applicator certification; (c) Maryland Department of Agriculture Fertilizer Applicator certification.
- 6. Pass Commission medical examination.

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Working Conditions:

Works in indoors and outdoor settings. Occasionally exposed to inclement weather, dirt, dust, unpleasant odors, and fumes from fertilizers, herbicides, insecticides, and pesticides; and exposure to wildlife and potentially harmful insects (i.e., bees, hornets, wasps) and traffic hazards and noise. Maintains situational awareness, adheres to established safety procedures, takes precautions and wears personal protective equipment to minimize potential hazards to self. As required, subject to call back for emergencies and occasionally work overtime, evenings and weekends. Ability to stand, walk, crouch, kneel, bend or squat for considerable periods of time; lift and carry materials and equipment weighing up to 49 pounds.