

Understanding Horticulture

HORTICULTURE is an unfamiliar term to many people. Yet, when they are told that caring for houseplants, growing tomatoes in the garden, and mowing the lawn are horticultural activities, the term suddenly becomes much clearer. Give it some thought, and you'll find that horticulture is part of our culture and everyday lives.



Objectives:



1. Define *horticulture*.
2. Identify the major areas of the horticulture industry.

Key Terms:



botany

floriculture

foliage plants

garden centers

horticulture

horticulture industry

horticulture science

horticulture technology

landscape horticulture

nursery

olericulture

ornamental horticulture

pomology

Horticulture

Horticulture is a segment of the agriculture industry. The term **horticulture** literally means the culture of a garden. However, the term has taken on a broader context. Horticulture includes the production and use of plants for food, comfort, and beautification.

A direct relationship exists between horticulture and science. The area of science most closely associated with horticulture is botany. **Botany** is the study of plants and plant processes. The field of science that deals with the cultivation of horticultural plants is known as **horticulture science**.

Science is applied across the horticulture industry. The application of science to horticulture is called **horticulture technology**. Successfully raising horticultural plants takes more than just daily watering. Time, patience, and an understanding of diverse scientific processes are needed to produce optimal plant growth.

The Horticulture Industry

The **horticulture industry** is the combination of scientific, technological, and production activities that ensure the satisfaction of the consumer. The horticulture industry can be divided into three areas: pomology, olericulture, and ornamental horticulture. Each area is unique and includes many career opportunities.

POMOLOGY

Pomology is the planting, harvesting, storing, processing, and marketing of fruit and nut crops. Fruit crops include both large and small fruits. Examples of large fruits are peaches, apples, and pears. Small fruits include strawberries, raspberries, and blueberries. Almonds, pecans, and walnuts are popular nut crops.



FIGURE 1. Pomology is the planting, harvesting, storing, processing, and marketing of fruit and nut crops. (Clockwise from top left: peaches, apples, strawberries, almonds.)

OLERICULTURE

The area of horticulture that involves the production of vegetable food crops is olericulture. **Olericulture** includes the planting, harvesting, storing, processing, and marketing of vegetable crops. Sweet corn, tomatoes, snap beans, and lettuce are examples of vegetable crops.

ORNAMENTAL HORTICULTURE

The growth and use of plants for their beauty is the area of horticulture known as **ornamental horticulture**. Ornamental horticulture involves the production and use of woody and herbaceous plants. Because of the use of green plants, the ornamental horticulture industry is often referred to as the “green industry.”

Ornamental horticulture is divided into two categories. These are floriculture and landscape horticulture. Both involve the use of flowering and foliage plants. **Foliage plants** are those used for their colorful greenery or leaves.

Floriculture is the area of ornamental horticulture associated with the production and use of flowers, potted plants, and annual bedding plants. It includes the use of floral products in the florist’s trade. Poinsettias, carnations, philodendrons, and petunias are common plants associated with floriculture.

The production and use of plants to beautify the outdoor environment is **landscape horticulture**. Landscape horticulture includes designing plans for landscapes, installing landscapes as specified in the plans, and maintaining the landscapes. Maples, oaks, forsythia, honeysuckle, English ivy, peonies, and Kentucky bluegrass are common landscape plant materials.



FIGURE 2. Foliage plants are used for their colorful greenery or leaves. Three different varieties of *Dracaena* are shown in the foreground.



FIGURE 3. Floriculture includes the use of floral products in the florist’s trade.



FIGURE 4. Landscape horticulture is the production and use of plants to beautify the outdoor environment.

Most plants used in landscape horticulture are obtained from a nursery. A **nursery** is a place that specializes in starting plants and growing them until they are ready to be transplanted to landscapes. Nurseries produce ground-cover plants, herbaceous perennials, flowering shrubs, evergreens, deciduous shade trees, and ornamental trees for retail and wholesale sales. Other nurseries, sometimes called sod farms, grow grass that is cut and moved to landscape projects.

Garden centers are retail outlets that sell plants grown in nurseries, along with garden supplies. A garden center frequently has a greenhouse range and floral services.

Summary:



Horticulture includes the production and use of plants for food, comfort, and beautification. The area of science most closely associated with horticulture is botany, which is the study of plants and plant processes. The field of science that deals with the cultivation of horticultural plants is known as horticulture science. The application of science to horticulture is called horticulture technology.

The horticulture industry can be divided into three areas: pomology, olericulture, and ornamental horticulture. Pomology is the planting, harvesting, storing, processing, and marketing of fruit and nut crops. Olericulture includes the planting, harvesting, storing, processing, and marketing of vegetable crops. The growth and use of plants for their beauty is the area of horticulture known as ornamental horticulture.

Ornamental horticulture is divided into two categories. Floriculture is the area of horticulture associated with the production and use of flowers, potted plants, and



FIGURE 5. A nursery is a place that specializes in starting plants and growing them until they are ready to be transplanted to landscapes.



FIGURE 6. Garden centers are retail outlets that sell plants grown in nurseries, along with garden supplies.

annual bedding plants. Landscape horticulture includes designing plans for landscapes, installing landscapes as specified in the plans, and maintaining the landscapes. A nursery is a place that specializes in starting plants and growing them until they are ready to be transplanted to landscapes. Garden centers are retail outlets that sell plants grown in nurseries, along with garden supplies.

Checking Your Knowledge:



1. What is the definition of horticulture?
2. What is the field of science that deals with the cultivation of horticultural plants?
3. How do the three main areas of horticulture differ?
4. What are the two major categories within ornamental horticulture?
5. What takes place in a nursery?

Expanding Your Knowledge:



Design a collage of the many areas of horticulture using trade magazines, gardening magazines, and other sources of images. Be prepared to display and discuss your creation.

Web Links:



What Is Horticulture?

<http://horticulture.sfasu.edu/whatishort.htm>

Career in Horticulture

http://www.kol.to/career_guidance25.htm

Horticulture

<http://www.lsu.edu/horticulture/whatis.html>