



Success blooms for horticulture students



Horticulture students at Bendigo TAFE have developed stunning ways to transform your space with greenery, with three hanging gardens selected as finalists for the 2020 Great Victorian Hanging Basket Competition.

Part of the 2020 Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show and led by the Royal Horticultural Society of Victoria, the competition received over 550 entries from across the state. Entries were submitted through digital photographs following the cancellation of the show due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Finalists include Bendigo TAFE students Ken Price, Rhys O'Sullivan and Mark Borradaile who are completing the Certificate III in Horticulture (AHC30710) at Castlemaine campus.

"We are very proud of our horticulture students from both our Castlemaine and Bendigo campuses who submitted entries for this competition," said Bendigo TAFE CEO Sally Curtain.

"The success of finalists Ken, Rhys and Mark reflect their skills and creativity, as well as the commitment of their teachers, like Karen Rogers, who supported them throughout this project.

Ms. Curtain highlighted the vital role played by TAFEs in developing work-ready graduates to meet industry needs.

"As a TAFE, we place a strong emphasis on exposing our students to unique practical experiences like these to hone and showcase their skills in preparation for future careers in industry," said Bendigo TAFE CEO Sally Curtain.

"The Victorian Government recently highlighted the vital role of TAFEs in helping the state rebuild from the COVID-19 pandemic, so it is important that Bendigo TAFE continues to develop skills and demonstrate to industry the quality students who are ready to join the workforce when required."

Career changer plants seeds of success with TAFE

As a father of three who worked in the one job – as a postman – for 12 years, the thought of returning to studies and pursuing a career change was a daunting one for Daniel Fortune.

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But it all paid off – Daniel completed the Certificate III in Parks and Garden at Bendigo TAFE while working as an apprentice at a secondary college. His training eventually led him to continuing into a full-time position as a gardener at the school and clinching a finalist award for Apprentice of the Year at the 2019 Victorian Training Awards.

“The main thing about horticulture that I really love is just being outside. Plants have been my passion since I was probably 10 or 12 through spending time with my grandparents in the garden and learning about different plants that are around me,” he said.

Uninspired by his job as a postman, Daniel decided to take small steps towards building a livelihood in a field he enjoyed – gardening. This initially led him to working part-time, without formal qualifications, in grounds keeping and maintenance at an events reception venue, but he soon faced a bigger decision when the venue closed down: either stay in the field or get formally trained to expand his options.

Daniel said taking the plunge to return to education was a challenge as a mature age student, especially as he had previously struggled with classroom settings while at school.

“It has been over 20 years since I was in a classroom so it was a bit intimidating with all the younger people around,” he said.

A combination of hands-on learning and individualised support from teachers helped Daniel adjust to his new life as an apprentice learner.

“The training I received at Bendigo TAFE has given me skills and confidence in my ability to grow and succeed, not only in my chosen career in horticulture, but in life as well,” he said, also noting that regularly applies new techniques gained from TAFE within his workplace.



Now thriving in his role as college gardener, Daniel is especially passionate about creating new garden spaces for students to relax, enjoy and recharge in. He is also keen to inspire others to consider TAFE as a pathway to an enjoyable career.

“The TAFE route has been really good for me. It suits all sorts of people in different backgrounds so I’d really recommend it,” he said.

Adaptable education to suit learning needs

A formal qualification can make all the difference in one’s career, especially when it doesn’t follow a rigid learning doctrine.

Many choose to pursue a qualification at TAFE because it’s flexible and adaptable. Bendigo TAFE, for instance, provides a wide range of options to support learning at one’s own pace, from hands-on, practical training to online and remote delivery.

Its Food and Fibre Centre of Excellence delivers courses through a mix of industry programs and simulated experiences in purpose-built facilities to prepare students with real-world job skills. This includes machinery operation and organisational development to laboratory analytical testing and science, all with a focus on building a viable, sustainable and environmentally responsible food and fibre sector.

“We work with many businesses across agriculture, horticulture, animal studies, natural resource management and science, and partner with them through our Industry Advisory Board to ensure curriculum matches the current and future needs of this fast-growing sector,” said Nicole Broe, director of Food and Fibre at Bendigo TAFE.

“Skills from our programs can be used in many settings from cropping, livestock production and agribusiness through to horticulture, landscaping and animal science.”

With an increasing demand for online and remote training options, Bendigo TAFE has also devised innovative ways to support practical learning in the digital age, like working with partners to film the process of setting up a weather station and soil probes at a farmer’s property to be made available to students digitally.

“We recognise that our students have different needs when it comes to learning, from those who thrive in hands-on, face-to-face environments to those who prefer online channels so they can learn from wherever they are,” said Ms. Broe.

“Our delivery modes are flexible, adaptive and multi-faceted to suit everyone.”

Article kindly provided by Bendigo TAFE.