

BY LIDIA NESCI

KUTZTOWN, March 31- Many people prefer to mow their own lawns or plant flowers in a garden, but for busy or lazy people, hiring a landscaper seems ideal. John Williams, 18, works as a landscaper for Bucks Country Gardens. “It’s more than just cutting grass and watering your plants. You wouldn’t think it, but landscaping is very stressful,” says Williams.

For two and a half years Williams has been working in landscaping. He’s always seen in steel toe boots, long pants, his company shirt and hat whether he’s working indoors at the nursery, or outdoors at a client’s home.

It’s seven in the morning and Williams is found loading the truck with tools. Once the truck arrives on the jobsite, Williams and the other landscapers that make up his crew unload the tools and have a meeting. The crew leader gives each member their assigned duty and they get to work.

According to Williams, he is mainly in charge of weed whacking, and planting. “No one realizes it takes a lot of knowledge to do what I do,” says Williams.

Williams still attends a tech school in order to learn how to run certain equipment, how deep to plant a seed, or even how often different plants need to be watered. Williams says he knows many different plants and what environment they need to be in to thrive. “My job is partly scientific,” said Williams.

Williams said he actually got his job through the tech school. “It gives us more hands on training and we get paid to learn,” says Williams. With that being said, the starting pay for an outdoor landscaper at Bucks Country Gardens is \$11.00 per hour. The starting pay for the indoor nursery however, is \$9.00 an hour.

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As Williams finishes his part of the job, he loads his equipment and stands by the truck, waiting for the others to finish, so they can go to their next job site, and the cycle continues.

Usually, the duties assigned to each crewmember all finish around the same time according to Williams. This is why he has two jobs, whereas the person mowing the lawn may only have that single job; both members take an equal amount of time to finish.

At around 12 in the afternoon, the crew takes their lunch, defined as the easiest part of the job according to Williams. The 30-minute unpaid lunch goes by quickly, and the crew is ready for another job. Williams trolls behind the other members wiping the sweat from his brow.

“The busiest time of the year for landscaping is in the spring and summer,” says Williams. “There’s more work to be done, and Bucks Country Gardens offers more landscaping ideas and choices.” Some of which Williams listed include, installing patios, ponds, stone paths, small waterfalls, etc.

The most difficult part of being a landscaper and working outside with a crew is keeping things organized, according to Williams. “You have to make sure you know where everyone is and what they are doing at all times otherwise things can be hazardous,” says Williams.

There are certain rules in place for the safety of the workers, the jobsite, any pedestrians, etc. “Where I do my work depends on if anyone else is doing work near me. There’s a rule that says someone can’t weed whack within 10ft. of a running lawnmower,” says Williams.

Williams gave an example of a true story to show how nerve wracking and important these rules really are. A worker was mowing the lawn instead of weed whacking (because it was too close to the house), and ran over a stick. This may not seem too bad, but the stick shot out and broke a window.

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“We called our supervisor and he came down to the jobsite. We were instructed to stay at that jobsite until the owners got home. We also missed all of our other jobs that day dealing with a mistake caused by someone’s carelessness,” says Williams.

The issue was resolved as the worker that had caused this problem had to pay for all the damages, according to Williams. “That would never had happened if they had just listened to the rules,” says Williams. “It’s accidents like these that make landscapers anxious.”

It’s 7 o’clock and the workday is coming to an end. Williams is covered in dirt with sweat dripping down his face, from his day’s duties. As every job is difficult in their own way, landscaping is no walk in the park.

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