

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Mike Hamblin Class of 2020



Gardening

How old were you when you started gardening? I was probably well into adulthood by the time I started gardening. I have always had a passion and worked as a chef in my life, so I began naturally to gravitate towards wanting the freshest vegetables and ingredients. It was and still is so amazing when you can get something to grow out of dirt and something so small. As time went on, I found that the gardens could provide much fresher and more economical products that a grocery store could provide.

How did you get interested in gardening and what do you like best about it? I think the interest in gardening was always in me, but I didn't start learning or paying attention to things until I was in my 20's.



My mother-in-law was the only person that I knew that gardened and I started helping her out in her gardens (never pass up on a bonding opportunity with your in-laws). Before long I wanted to make one at my own home, but didn't know where to begin and that is when I started looking into the Master Gardener Program. What I like best about gardening is how peaceful it can be; it can also

be frustrating at times, but far more peace than frustration.

What was the first thing you ever planted? When I first wanted to begin gardening, I rented an apartment and didn't have space for a traditional garden, so I decided to put basil into pots and set them out on the south side of the building. The south side of the building was around the corner from the outside water source and I realized my first mistake was not thinking of that ahead of time. At first my plan was to carry water to the basil, but I soon grew tired of that and began to miss some days. The basil did grow, but looked horrible and it wasn't until after it was almost dead that a neighbor took one look at the small pots that I had them in and said that the southern sun is drying out the small bit of dirt that I have in there. It would have needed to be watered multiple times a day and in combination with the distant water source, it was a project doomed from the start.

What is your favorite plant, shrub or flower and why? Amaryllis; they caught my eye on the cover of a magazine a few years ago. I ordered one from the supplier just to see how it would go. I first started



the bulb in water, but then quickly moved it into a pot and it took off from there. The flowers are beautiful and I have had the same bulb for three years now and have gotten flowers each year, along with two baby plants along the way. I read how keeping the bulb from year to year is a challenge for some so I am glad that I have had success in it.

Is there any part of gardening that frustrates you and why? Succulents; I seem to kill or neglect each one of them that I have had. I am currently taking a break from them and would love to say that it is because I am concentrating on learning other plants but the truth is that I just don't want to kill any more of them.

Personal

Do you have any hidden talents? Or what would be two things that your peers would say you do extremely well? I wouldn't say that I have hidden talents, but most of my talents are based in the kitchen. I certainly have a passion for planning and making food for my family and decided to make a career out of it. I have always loved showing others new items that they hadn't tried before and then seeing them enjoy the new food.

Tell us about your significant other? Kids? Pets? I have been married to my lovely wife, Danielle, for 12 years and we have been

together for 15 years. We decided early on in our relationship that we didn't want children, so we loaded up on pets and spoil our nieces and nephews rotten. We have one pint-sized dog named Penny and two cats that are brothers but look and act nothing alike.



General

What is the best vacation you've ever taken? In June/July of 2019 my wife and I were blessed to be able to take a vacation to Croatia and Italy. We went with a wonderful group of people and both places were warm, near water, and magical. The food and drinks in both locations were divine and we loved the history of this area of the world. The food was grown to perfection and it seemed as if this part of the world was blessed with the most perfect weather and land for growing.

If money were no object, where would you vacation to and why? Space would be nice to visit, but not to vacation to; other than that, anywhere in Europe that I haven't been to before.