



**News release**

July 12, 2016

Media inquiries: Lee Colony, (262) 359-0798

### **Horticulture program expands in Walworth County**

Industry need for more workers in the horticulture industry has prompted Gateway Technical College to expand its Horticulture-Landscape program in Walworth County.

Enrollment for Fall 2016 courses has already begun and courses will be offered at Badger High School in Lake Geneva.

"The horticulture industry is a growing area, there are more jobs available than workers to fill them," said Horticulture program instructor Courtney Greve.

"We are seeing increases in the pay for those in the industry, and the amount employers are willing to pay for those who have the technical and soft skills. This program offers students the ability to gain those skills."

Tailored for those already working in the field, the program offers night, weekend and online offerings. It allows current workers the ability to obtain the degree while they work.

Students gain the skills to perform their current position better and to qualify for positions with higher pay and benefits.

About half of the program is now offered at Badger High School, with the remainder at the college's Kenosha Campus.

In addition, the program provides a focus for high-schoolers, who can earn up to a year of credits through transcribed credits and Youth Options. That means students take Gateway classes, earn college credit and can do so tuition-free. Those taking this route would then only have one year of college credits to complete – and pay for – their degree.

"By far the largest obstacle our company has faced over the past 20 years is the inability to find employees with even the most basic horticultural skills," said Brent Achtenhagen, owner of Bret Achtenhagen's Seasonal Services.

"The general public is simply not aware that individuals with a modest amount of horticultural skills are eligible to earn between \$15 and \$20 per hour and individuals with five or more years can earn \$20 to \$28 per hour in the landscape industry.

"The instructors in the Horticultural Department at Gateway Technical College are well aware of the excellent wages and benefits students entering the horticultural field are eligible to earn. They do an exemplary job preparing students for employment in our industry."

Gateway Technical College collaborates with communities in Kenosha, Racine and Walworth counties to ensure economic growth and viability by providing education, training, leadership and technological resources to meet the changing needs of students, employers and communities.

XXX