

**Trainees:** Gary, Dallta, Marty, Shawn, Steve, Eric, Tim, and Trent

**Instructor:** Renee Portanova

**Date:** May - early July 2010

**Locations:** The Children's Room in Arlington, the Shirley Eustis House and Puddingstone Garden in Roxbury, Gore Place and the Nursery Garden in Waltham, the Dorchester Historical Society, and Nira Rock in Jamaica Plain.

**Description:**

Every Wednesday morning, for ten weeks during the spring and early summer, Planting Brigade Coordinator Renee Portanova taught the eight trainees new horticultural maintenance skills at one of COGdesign's community client sites. In the afternoons, the trainees applied what they learned by performing spring cleanup tasks to ready the sites for bountiful spring growth and blooms.

The trainees are also part of Pine Street Inn's Handy-Works, a program for men transitioning from homelessness back into the workforce, where they acquire job skills and experience to rebuild their lives. This intensive course teaches building and maintenance skills, job readiness, and work safety.

The program was a huge success for all involved, providing practical skills to the trainees and pro bono maintenance to clients lacking the funds to pay for landscape services. At the end of the program, the trainees said they appreciated learning the "why" behind the work and developing a new awareness of the environment. At the end of each work session, they felt the pride of accomplishment. "What's most important," said Eric, "is the beauty of it when you're done!"

