



Media Contact:

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Craig Jenkins-Sutton
President of Topiarius Urban Garden and Floral Design

Areas of Expertise:

- Urban gardening
- Organic gardening
- Vegetables gardens
- Community gardens
- Gardening with children
- Flower and tree selection/potting and beds
- Floral design
- Seasonal checklists
- Seasonal planting, shoveling, etc. tips

Craig Jenkins-Sutton:

Craig's love of the landscape was a natural progression of his upbringing in central Minnesota where he grew up at a youth camp where his father was the director and his mother oversaw the kitchen. Normal chores revolved around maintaining the camp's property - from mowing to construction projects to snow removal. When he attended college in Chicago, he maintained his connection with the outdoors through a variety of back packing trips. After a month in the Sierra Nevada Mountains he did return to work with disadvantage teens at Covenant Children's Home in Princeton, IL, but soon realized that his career path needed to encompass the outdoors.

In a confluence of events, Craig approached a friend who managed the landscape job training program through ServiceMaster at Chicago Christian Industrial League [CCIL]. Craig was quickly hired as the Operations Manager. Over his tenure at CCIL, Craig helped bring the program from a 3 truck operation to a 22 truck operation and trained over 100 residents in the landscaping job training program. Most of the landscaping contracts were with the city of Chicago. At this time many city green spaces, median strips and public schools were maintained by CCIL. One of their significant projects was working with the mayor's team to beautify the river walk, particularly with seasonal color window boxes. During the winter, Craig managed the snow removal services for CCIL, learning the ins and outs of removing snow in Chicago.



During Craig's time at CCIL, he married his wife Sara. Her career brought them to Attleboro, MA. So after working in the big city, Craig garnered some experience with a small construction company. Although not digging in the earth, it was an opportunity for him to expand on his construction skills that would be translated into his work at Topiarius building decks, pergolas and custom planter boxes. Craig did soon become a Construction Manager at D. Foley Landscape where he continued to fine tune his plant knowledge, installation skills, and design esthetic. He also continued to expand on his experience in snow removal and ice management services for clients in MA.

Throughout his positions, Craig came to embrace the fact that he had a strong entrepreneurial spirit. Recognizing the level of risk needed to start one's own business, far out-weighted being an employee. So while in MA, the vision of an urban landscaping business was formed. In early spring of 2003, Craig and Sara returned to Chicago to start Topiarius. Craig's first landscaping job was completed out of the back of his Ford Focus wagon using 5 gallon buckets and a shovel.

After two years in business, his wife Sara left her human resources position and joined Topiarius. During the landscape season they hired local college students to help out with the labor. Slowly the clientele list was built through referrals of satisfied customers. In 2007 Topiarius began their Floral Design services for events and weddings.

In January 2010, Craig and Sara made a significant decision to deliberately grow Topiarius into a larger company. Through extensive work with and guidance of a consultant, Topiarius went from a 2 ½ employee operation to an 11 person operation with an office and landscape yard on the west side of the city. Through the recent economic downturn, Craig and Sara have worked to increase the sales at Topiarius and have more than doubled them this past season. As the president of the company, Craig continues to steer the business while wearing many hats as salesman and designer. Topiarius' goals are set for 2011 and they're looking to double sales again.

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