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meetings + events

MEET GERI MILLER

POSTED JANUARY 29, 2017



These interviews are part of a series that highlights new hires within the industry. Have you recently started a new role or do you know someone who has? Submit your ideas to brittany.trevick@tigeroak.com.

*Gerri Miller was recently hired as the master gardener at **The Ranch Malibu**.*

1. What are you looking forward to the most in your new role as master gardener at The Ranch Malibu?

There are several reasons this project excited me. As a culinary horticulturist, it is always a great thing when a chef seeks you out. So, the fact that Chef Nina contacted me hoping to work together was thrilling to me. Once I met the owners and their team and learned of their deep commitment to supporting the garden and orchard, I was hooked! And having 2 acres to practice our art in is indeed a rare find in urban farming.

2. How do you think past experiences have prepared you for this role?

My prior experiences in growing for restaurants—in both resort and stand-alone settings—certainly prepared me to address the bottom line issues that are important to ownership. Over time, I've been able to become very efficient through my management and growing strategies, while preserving the artisanal, handcrafted aspect of the way we grow. Ultimately though, it is the deeply collaborative relationships with highly talented chefs over the years that has helped my staff and myself hone our craft and stay cutting-edge.

3. How did you get into the industry?

While I'm a lifelong gardener, my entry into the world of edibles began with my kids. In 1999, inspired by the burgeoning movement to put a garden in every school, I trained for, designed, and implemented a school garden in my son's elementary school. The nudge from the teachers to take on more and more of a teaching role in the garden program prompted me to seek out and obtain certification as a Master Gardener. In 2009, I started Home Grown Edible Landscapes to address the exploding interest of growing vegetables in both residential and commercial settings. Growing for restaurants and spas was always part of our book of business, which led to the opening of our urban micro farms on vacant lots on Abbot Kinney in Venice and Manhattan Beach.

4. What are you hoping to achieve in your new role?

The short-term goal is to bring the entire garden and orchard into a new era of high yield production for The Ranch Malibu. The Ranch has committed to rebuilding the 32 4x24' raised beds after six years of use which is a serious undertaking. Bringing my company on-board underscores their level of commitment to providing their guests and clients the very freshest, nutritious certified organic produce possible. The long-term goal, once all the beds are brought back into production, is to have the garden and orchard producing enough to provide most, if not all, of the produce required by The Ranch Malibu, The Ranch 4.0 and The Ranch Daily operations. We are even beginning to plan for The Ranch Sonoma's production garden and orchard!

5. What do you enjoy most about the industry?

I must say that being a gardener of any discipline means you're a nurturer at heart. Seeing the emotion on your client's face as you create a garden for them, teach them and harvest for them is our ultimate goal. That goes for everyone from preschoolers on up to Top Chefs. That's truly the joy and reward of our profession.