

The RJ Internship Experience



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A Professional Internship Program by RJ
Lawn & Landscape

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Presented by:

RJ Lawn & Landscape

Waukee, Iowa | Serving the Greater Des Moines Metro

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Program Introduction

At RJ Lawn & Landscape, we're more than just mowers and mulch—we're builders of careers, leaders in the green industry, and a family-owned company that puts people first. From day one, we've focused on helping our team grow personally and professionally by offering continued education, leadership development, and real-world experience. We don't just want you to find a job—we want to help you build a career you're proud of.

The RJ Internship Experience is designed to immerse students in the many facets of the green industry—from hands-on fieldwork to business operations, leadership, and client relations. Interns are given the opportunity to explore different areas of the company—including production, design, sales, administration, and high-level leadership—to develop a well-rounded understanding of what it means to work and lead in this field.

Unlike traditional internships that may leave you stuck on a crew or behind a desk, RJ interns shadow and collaborate with real professionals at every level of the company. You'll join our team at client meetings, attend production and leadership sessions, and work side-by-side with seasoned experts in the field. Interns are even encouraged to tailor their schedules to accommodate sports, vacations, graduation, and other commitments—making this opportunity both flexible and fulfilling.

And yes—it's paid.

Internship Tracks & Department Rotations

RJ interns gain real-world experience by actively contributing to field operations and internal leadership. While interns may choose to focus more heavily on a specific department, everyone will rotate through all divisions to build a comprehensive understanding of the business—from boots-on-the-ground work to executive-level strategy.

Field Departments (Optional Specialization Areas, Interns Pick 1)

- Mow & Maintenance

Learn the fundamentals of turf health and aesthetics through regular mowing, trimming, and detail work. Interns gain insight into route planning, efficiency strategies, and seasonal service expectations.

- Irrigation

Dive into system installation, seasonal startups and shutdowns, troubleshooting, and controller programming. Interns work hands-on with water management systems critical to healthy landscapes.

- Applications (Lawn & Plant Health)

Apply fertilizer, weed control, and pest treatments while learning about chemical safety, turf diagnostics, and plant health care from certified professionals.

- Performance Turf

Explore high-level turf management practices for athletic fields, golf courses, and premium lawn properties. Interns learn advanced fertilization schedules, elite mowing patterns, and turf diagnostics specific to high-performance environments.

- Grounds Maintenance

Focus on the horticultural side of the industry through plant care, pruning, bed maintenance, and seasonal clean-ups. This department prioritizes landscape aesthetics and long-term plant health.

- Landscape Construction

Build retaining walls, patios, plant beds, and other landscape features. Learn about reading plans, using equipment, and managing project flow from excavation to final walkthrough.

Internal Rotations (Required for All Interns)

- Recruiting & Training (with the Chief Culture Officer)

Understand how RJ attracts, hires, and trains team members. Participate in onboarding activities, training sessions, and cultural development efforts.

- Administration

Work alongside our office team to learn scheduling, billing, and customer service functions. Understand the systems that keep daily operations running smoothly.

- Account Management & Client Relations

Shadow account managers and sales reps during site visits and client meetings. Learn how we maintain relationships, upsell services, and resolve issues with professionalism.

- Design & Estimating

Explore the creative side of landscaping. Participate in design sessions, site measurements, and proposal development with our landscape designers and estimators.

- Finance & Budgeting (with the Controller)

Get a high-level look at how job costing, payroll, and financial decision-making support the company's growth and profitability.

- Leadership & Strategy (with the CEO & COO)

Sit in on leadership meetings, observe executive decision-making, and learn how vision, culture, and metrics guide every aspect of RJ's operations.

Program Details

The RJ Internship Experience is designed to be flexible, educational, and hands-on—providing students with a well-rounded introduction to the green industry while accommodating their academic and personal schedules.

Schedule & Availability

- Internships are offered year-round, with the most popular session running May through August.
- Schedules are flexible to allow time for vacations, graduation events, sports, and other commitments.
- Interns typically work 20 to 40 hours per week, depending on availability and season.

Compensation

- This is a paid internship for all field-based work and specialty shadowing within production departments.
- Hourly wage starts at \$19.10/hour and may increase depending on prior experience and performance.
- Time spent in internal department rotations is unpaid.
- On average, 80% of the internship is paid field experience, while 20% is unpaid shadowing and development.

Eligibility

- Open to high school and college students—no prior certifications or experience required.
- Ideal for students studying or interested in horticulture, turf science, landscaping, construction, business, or leadership.

Training & Development

- Interns participate in departmental shadow days, team training events, and hands-on experiences designed to deepen industry knowledge.
- Interns are paired with mentors and leaders throughout the company.
- Opportunities for goal setting, mid-internship check-ins, and final reviews help interns track growth and development.

What You'll Need & What You'll Learn

What You'll Need

- A strong work ethic and positive attitude
- Willingness to work outdoors and learn in a hands-on environment
- An interest in landscaping, horticulture, turf, or construction.
- High school or college enrollment (no prior experience or certifications required)

What You'll Learn

- How the green industry operates across departments—from production to leadership
- Practical, hands-on skills in turf care, irrigation, construction, and plant maintenance
- Client communication, account management, and professional relationship building
- Leadership development, goal-setting, and team collaboration
- Budgeting, scheduling, and how internal systems drive performance
- Career pathway insights across the industry: field work, sales, admin, and executive leadership

A Day in the Life: What to Expect

No two days are exactly the same at RJ—but that's part of what makes this internship so valuable. Interns rotate between internal shadow days (working with office departments and leadership) and external field days (hands-on learning with production teams). Each experience offers unique insight into how the green industry functions on every level.

Internal Shadow Days

- Start Time: Around 9:00 AM
- End Time: Typically wraps up around lunch (12:00–2:00 PM) or end of day (4:00–5:00 PM)
- Activities May Include:
 - Sitting in on weekly or production meetings
 - Shadowing sales calls or recruitment interviews
 - Participating in training sessions or employee onboarding
 - Reviewing budget or job cost reports with the Controller
 - Observing team collaboration and office operations

External Field Days

- Start Time: Around 7:00 AM
- End Time: Typically wraps up around lunch (11:00 AM–1:00 PM) or end of day (4:00–6:00 PM)
- Activities May Include:
 - Assisting with mowing, irrigation installs, or plant care
 - Riding along to job sites with an Account Manager
 - Shadowing a Crew Leader during spring cleanups or hardscape installs
 - Learning about safety, logistics, and field production flow
 - Observing and discussing project efficiency and client satisfaction

How to Apply

Applying to The RJ Internship Experience is simple—and we encourage students from all backgrounds and levels of experience to reach out.

Application Process

To apply, email your resume or CV directly to our Chief Culture Officer:

Nick Paoli

paolin@rjlawnandlandscape.com

515-782-8405

Optional materials include:

- A cover letter
- A statement of purpose
- A current curriculum or class list from a relevant program (e.g., horticulture, landscape architecture, turf management, business)

Application Deadlines

- October 31 – For Spring/Summer internship consideration

- March 31 – For Summer/Fall internship consideration

Only interns selected for Summer/Fall are eligible for a Winter Snow Operations Internship.

Selection Process

1. First Round: Phone or in-person interview

2. Second Round: Panel interview with RJ team members

3. Team Review: Leadership team evaluates fit and learning goals

4. Final Step: Internship offers are extended directly by the Chief Culture Officer

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

- Can I intern part-time while taking classes?

Yes! We offer flexible scheduling and can accommodate class schedules, extracurricular activities, and other commitments. Interns are required to work a minimum of 30 hours per week.

- What should I wear to the internship?

RJ provides all necessary field uniforms and personal protective equipment (PPE) for outdoor work. For internal shadow days, we follow a business casual or golf casual dress code—professional yet comfortable.

- Is housing provided?

At this time, housing is not provided. However, we're happy to assist with recommendations for interns relocating to the Des Moines metro area.

- Do I need to have experience in landscaping or horticulture?

Not at all. We welcome students with a passion for learning, even if they're new to the industry.

- Will I receive a letter of recommendation?

Yes, interns who complete the program in good standing and demonstrate professionalism may request a letter of recommendation from the RJ team.

- Is there potential for full-time employment after the internship?

Absolutely. Many interns have gone on to secure full-time roles at RJ Lawn & Landscape, and we use this program as a key pipeline for future hiring.

Thank You & Final Thoughts

Thank you for considering The RJ Internship Experience. At RJ Lawn & Landscape, we believe in building more than landscapes—we build people, careers, and a culture rooted in hard work, integrity, and leadership. This internship is your opportunity to explore the green industry alongside a team that is passionate, innovative, and committed to helping you succeed.

If you have any questions or want to chat about how this internship could work for you, please reach out directly. We're excited to meet you and help you grow.

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