

## HAVE YOU MET...

### Dixie Speck Solterra Landscape

#### My first job in this industry was...

a six-month internship with a small operation owned by a landscape architect. Most of his clients were in Buckhead. I labored alongside one other person and occasionally a third. We did medium-scale installations and I even did maintenance every Friday. I had to move soil, dig holes, lay sod, mow/edge grass, prune, weed, blow, etc. One of our maintenance properties was at a church on Peachtree near the Fox Theater. My



Dixie with husband and business partner, Peter.

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original career was in engineering and I was so afraid that one of my former colleagues would be in Atlanta on business and see me with a blower strapped to my back!

#### One of the biggest challenges in my career has been...

balancing the amount of work required with the financial resources necessary to hire the number of people and the quality/experience level needed.

#### The people who have influenced my career are...

- My professors at Gwinnett Tech (Drs. Ludwig and Gibson)
- A few people who are MALTA members and have been in the industry for 15-30 years, who became and still are my mentors.
- PLANET members who serve as mentors through their Trailblazer Program
- Industry consultants like Joe Skelton and Tom Oyler
- Some subcontractors who have become strategic allies and referral partners
- Many various authors

#### My biggest career success so far has been...

the opportunity to appear frequently in TV shows such as HGTV, Good Day Atlanta, Good Morning Atlanta; radio shows; and several magazines and publications including *Atlanta Home Improvement* and *Jezebel*.

#### If I had to do things over again, I would...

take more care and spend the money to hire the right people with the right experience and talents from the beginning.

**The thing I like most about my career is...**

being able to be outside for most of the day when the weather is really nice, working with beautiful plant material, contributing to positive experiences for our clients, and being a business owner.

**My least favorite part of my job is...**

not having much time at this point to travel the world.

**One piece of advice I would give to someone entering the green industry today is...**

continue your study and education in industry topics including green initiatives, smart irrigation, production efficiency, and to understand how to provide exceptional customer service. Knowledge and attention in all of these areas is critical for business success now and the near future.

**The things most responsible for my success are...**

my dedication to customer service, high quality work, continuing education, continuous marketing and sales efforts, always being alert to opportunities and keeping both eyes on the future.

**One thing that really annoys me is...**

any situation where someone is being inconsiderate.

**When I'm not working, I like to...**

read, eat at an interesting restaurant, go on some travel adventure, hike in the North Georgia mountains.

**If I could change careers, just for a month, I would...**

be an international travel show host like Rick Steves or Samantha Brown.

**One thing most people don't know about me is...**

that I am a scuba diver and have done dive trips such as swimming with reef sharks, with a school of sea turtles, with Stingrays, with dolphins, and a dive trip through underwater caves in Mexico.



Solterra renovated the front foundation plantings at this home to accent its architectural features.



This landscape is an example of Solterra's design, color, and maintenance work.