



*Employers can find more workplace learning tips, tools and resources on READ's website at [www.readsociety.bc.ca/workplace.htm](http://www.readsociety.bc.ca/workplace.htm), through the Community Social Planning Council, and from Bridges for Women.*

## Training helps nursery staff grow

A government program to increase employers' and employees' Essential Skills is helping staff at a local nursery better serve their curious and eager green-thumbed customers.

"Our business is 100 per cent customer-based," says Jasmine Maxwell, manager of Cannor Nursery on Elk Lake Drive.

Maxwell and several co-workers participated in three free training courses offered through a partnership of the READ Society, Bridges for Women and the Community Social Planning Council.

The SkillsPlus program, funded through the Canada-British Columbia Labour Market Agreement, offers free training in the nine Essential Skills including reading, writing, document use, computer use, thinking, oral communication, working with others, and continuous learning.

Cannor employees from the Elk Lake location and Sears Garden Centre at Hillside Mall were offered the chance to take courses on customer service training, making presentations and Occupational First Aid, says Helen Thomas, a workplace educator at the READ Society.

"We interviewed Cannor employees to determine their needs and then customized our training to focus on those skills," Thomas says. To make it easier for staff to attend, the courses were offered on-site.

Maxwell says she has seen an increase in confidence levels among staff called on to make in-store presentations on subjects as diverse as drought-tolerant gardening, green roofs and living walls, bamboo and more.

Employee Addison Neill enjoyed the chance to hone his customer service skills through a Personality Dimensions course. "We're so busy that you don't always have time to think. This course offered me effective tools to use when dealing with customers."

Maxwell agrees, saying the course is helping her recognize how differently people think – something she can use with both customers and co-workers. "We're team-based and we pull from everyone. What I took away from this experience was the team bonding and strengthening as a group."



Cannor Nursery on Elk Lake Drive