Root Sorter

Worst Science Jobs II: Number 15

By William Speed Weed | November 2004

Take a 20-pound bag of mulch, dump it on a table, and sort its contents by size, down to the half millimeter. This is the mind-numbing task of the root sorter. “We know lots about the ecosystem above the ground,” says Ruth Yanai, a professor at the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry. “But we’re just starting to get a sense of the ecosystem underground.” Among other things, Yanai studies how long roots live and what effect acid rain has on root growth. To do her research, she needs roots to be sorted by size—and we’re not talking inch-large tubers, but tiny tendrils. One of her workers does it eight hours a day. With a pile of roots in front of him, he uses tweezers to put them in size-appropriate piles. One batch of roots takes him two hours, for less money than he’d get busying tables at

Peter Stemmle

Poorly compensated, tedious (see more)

Go to Forums
Print This Article
E-Mail This Article

Denny's.

Share this article (What's this?)

Dig this del.icio.us Netscape reddit Fark Slashdot

Top 5 Most Popular Articles on popsci.com Today:
1. The Speeding Outhouse
2. PopSci's Future of the Car - Concept Cars - SMART Car - Page 1
3. PopSci's Future of the Car - Concept Cars - Javelin Speedsled
4. PopSci's Future of the Car - Concept Cars - Extender Elasttruck
5. PopSci's Future of the Car - Concept Cars - Tesla - Page 1

with automatic renewal

Name
Address
City
ST/Province
Zip/Postal
E-mail

THE MARKETPLACE SPONSORED LINKS

2 RISK FREE ISSUES

Name
Address
City
Zip/Postal
E-mail

8/17/2007 5:15 PM