

Jane Hall

D.S. Cole Growers Internship Evaluation

May 24, 2012 – August 24, 2012

My internship experience at D.S. Cole Growers proved to be expansive in the activities I learned and the tasks I was assigned. At first, I shadowed the growers (Chris Schlegel, Jason Ginn, and Lee Nye) in the compartments of the greenhouses they each oversaw, observing their daily tasks and responsibilities. Chris Schlegel, the head grower, assigned to me one compartment of the greenhouse to start learning in. Over the first few weeks, I learned proper hand-watering technique, and how to manipulate the ebb-and-flood program through the greenhouse computer system. During this time, I was also taught proper watering of newly potted seedlings to ensure healthy rooting out.



In the first month or so of the internship, I did not only experience what the growers do, but I also worked with the shipping, production, and tipping/shearing teams. Working with shipping was definitely not my favorite few days, but I learned a lot about how much work it takes to fill orders for customers in a huge greenhouse with hundreds of different plants. I also learned the tag and bench barcode tracking system that D.S. Cole Growers uses to locate where crops are in the greenhouse, which was essential for tracking down the specific crops that shipping needed to pull every day. When needed, I

also helped other staff members with fertilizer mixing, tipping/pinching plants, weekly pest counting and sticky card distribution.

Every year, Jason and Barbara (tipping/shearing) work together to plant color spots in medians throughout Loudon, to beautify the town and attract attention to the new crops D.S. Cole has to offer each year. For the better part of a week, I helped plant six color spots consisting almost a thousand plants total. This gave me some awesome and unexpected experience in outdoor planting, which furthered my interest in public botanical gardens. I was also periodically responsible for taking out the portable water tank and watering the color spots, giving me the opportunity to see my hard work grow and flourish.



At the end of June, my coworker Keenan left and I became responsible for the main propagation compartments of the greenhouse. For the rest of my internship, I learned how to manipulate the misting systems, screen and vent systems, as well as how to properly root cuttings through the use of mist programs, tents, remay coverings, and Oasis(trademark) foam trays (for poinsettia crops). I also learned how to calculate, mix, and apply fungicides and pesticides to crops, wearing the proper PPE while spraying (I learned pesticide safety before I was guided by Chris in pesticide/fungicide use and application). I became fully responsible for the growing and maintenance of cyclamen and poinsettias, the two biggest winter crops D.S. Cole has to offer. I learned the

specifics of growing these two crops, which proved to be frustrating at times, but I learned so much about the intricacies of certain crops.



Overall, my internship at D.S. Cole was challenging, but truly rewarding, and a summer I will never forget. I had some wonderful people who put their whole hearts forward to teach and guide me through the greenhouse, and I have learned so much practical information I would have never achieved without this internship. Everyone was more than willing to help me learn, and it gave me confidence once the growers trusted me with the thousands of plants put in my care. On top of that, it was extremely useful and fulfilling to have gained practical knowledge in plant care. I learned each complex part of the greenhouse growing process, and I have even more assurance in knowing that greenhouse plants are really what I want to work with in my career.