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Vic and Margaret Ball Internship Report
Welby Gardens Company, Denver, Colorado
May 2012 – August 2012

My journey to the West began on May 10th with a 957 mile drive from my home state of Illinois to Denver, Colorado. As the lush green of farm country turned to the almost barren lands of Nebraska, the large oak groves were replaced with pockets of Russian olive trees, the likes of which are not common in Illinois. As I crossed the border into Colorado, I expected to see mountains almost immediately, only to be disappointed with a sparse landscape riddled with cows. Only after traveling closer to the city and changing my direction of travel from south to west did I see them. What a sight to see! Receiving this scholarship allowed me the opportunity to travel the farthest West I have ever been. This scholarship also sent me to one of the top 100 growers in the country, Welby Gardens. My twelve week internship with Welby began with a walk through and general introduction on Saturday May 12th, and work starting on Monday the 14th.

Welby has three different locations in the Denver area. After reporting to work on Monday and filling out all the required HR paperwork I was assigned to the Washington Street location for the next few weeks. Upon arrival at this location I was under the guidance of Ryan, the lead grower. One of the tasks we did that day was take a sample of petunia leaf and perform a tobacco mosaic virus test on it. With the results coming in as a faint positive we decided to wait a few days and then do a re-test. The rest of the week involved a lot of dead heading and cutting back of plants. I was taught how to use the mechanical sheering machine which sped up the pruning process immensely and also allowed for more uniformity in growing. An important aspect of growing that Ryan went over with me was the water and fertilizer

system this location used as well as the Wadsworth environmental control system. Without either of which a quality product cannot be grown. The highlight of my first week, however, would have to be the chance meeting of the representatives from the AFE. I was appreciative that I was able to thank them each in person. Other highlights of my time at the Washington Street location included mixing of fertilizer for the hydroponics operation as well as releasing beneficial insects on the organic basil, talking about growth regulator use in greenhouse production, and beginning to learn the proper watering techniques.

Beginning on May 28th, the next few weeks were spent at Welby Main. The first tasks included cutting back of trial material, evaluation of trial material, and preparing trial material to be transported to Colorado State University's outdoor trial grounds. Following those tasks it was time to prepare and plant Welby's outdoor trial beds. I have to say that I was very impressed at how efficiently and accurately we were able to plant the trial beds. The total area planted came out to be 12,600 sq. ft. It was then preparing trial material to be transported to the Westwoods location, and then assisting at that location with the potting of the trial material into their patio pots used for display. After that it was time to switch to grower operations at Welby Main where I worked with the assistant grower Edwardo. He went through proper watering techniques with me as well as bug scouting, distributing beneficial insects and fertilizing the basil crop with organic fertilizer. The remainder of my time at Welby was spent in preparation for the upcoming trial show. Tasks included trimming and dead heading, placing signs, spacing, and organizing. I was only sad that I did not get to witness the full end result of my labors, as my internship ended just before the trial show.

In addition to work, I was also able to participate in a few industry related events. Traveling to CSU to evaluate the perennial trials and see their trial gardens fully planted was a great experience. Another event held a little later at CSU was a Colorado Nursery and Greenhouse Association barbeque where it was interesting to listen to some of the important things going on with greenhouse industry in and around Colorado as well as meet people in the industry aside from those working at Welby. This event also gave another opportunity to appreciate the trial gardens. I was also able to attend the opening and dedication ceremony of

the new bonsai pavilion and Japanese tea house at the Denver Botanic Garden. I would not have had the opportunity to attend this event had I not been with Welby.

I have had a great internship with Welby. It was reassuring to be welcomed and appreciated. I would gladly recommend Welby to anyone seeking an internship opportunity. The hands on experience and level of training I received during my internship with Welby Gardens will become an invaluable part in the development of my career in the horticulture and greenhouse industry. Not only that, but I bring back to Illinois with me many adventures, life lessons on living so far from familiarity, some great friendships, and the drive to one day call Colorado home. All of which would not have been possible without the generosity and support from the Ball family and the American Floral Endowment. Thank you for enabling me to have such a great experience!



The planting of the trial beds at Welby Main.



Harvesting tomatoes.



Myself, with the other two interns outside the Westwoods location.