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2013 Vic & Margaret Ball Internship with Sun Valley Growers  
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## **Student Report**

Sun Valley Growers is a large-scale cut bulb and field flower producer. Their main crops are lilies, iris, tulip, freesia, hyacinth, and hydrangea. They host interns at the Arcata farm on a regular basis, and three of us lived together in a house on the premise. We were each provided with a bicycle to get around the large farm. My internship lasted from the first week of June until the first week of December. This was a high output production, and 60-hour weeks were not uncommon. I worked 5-6 days per week and had access to every job on the farm. The staff was flexible with our needs as interns.

My first position was in the warehouse packing flowers for shipping. I learned to work very quickly, and eventually moved on to unloading carts of flowers for the other packers. That lasted over a month, then I was moved to the small propagation crew for three weeks. These tasks were much closer to the kinds of things we do in school. My supervisor would bring in cuttings from another part of the farm, and I would trim, treat (in rooting hormone), and plant them into plugs. We only propagated two genus while I was there: Ilex and Hypericum. During that time I handled about 2000 individual plants. After that I spent a month picking hydrangeas. This crew was also small. I harvested hundreds of hydrangea flowers each day, paying special attention to color and grade. Next was tulip bunching for two weeks, then lily sleeving. Both of those departments had a lot of personnel and operated as assembly lines using conveyor belts (similar to packing in the warehouse). At this point I approached the greenhouse manager and was able to shadow him for a week. From this vantage I was able to see many more aspects of the business, such as sales and production. I even spent two days at a nearby vineyard where I mixed vats of fermenting grapes, pressed them, and pumped wine into barrels.

This internship was an eye opening experience. When I started, I had aspirations of someday being a greenhouse manager. I thought that it would be a career that would allow me to work closely with plants. However, I came to learn that on a large-scale farm like Sun Valley, most of the company's efforts are spent on value-added processes. I observed that the greenhouse manager spent more time managing personnel, inventory, and equipment issues than he did growing. I also learned that experience is crucial to getting hired at a farm like this one. I definitely need more work experience, so my plan is to intern/work at a smaller nursery where personnel issues will not overshadow the horticultural side of the business. I would also like to work with companies that use technology rather than manpower to increase production. I made valuable connections with professionals in my field of studies. Their hard work and dedication has inspired me. I am more passionate than ever about plants, and cannot express enough how deeply I appreciate the opportunity that the American Floral Endowment has provided me. I look forward to continuing my horticultural studies, launching my career, and likewise giving back to the community someday.