

Mary Lewis

## AFE Final Report

During my 8 month internship with the Walt Disney World Parks and Resorts Living with the Land attraction, I had a large and wide variety of duties and tasks I was expected to



perform. In terms of greenhouse responsibilities, my job was to propagate, grow out, and then move into the “show” greenhouse over 100 differing varieties of crops. This ranged from edible flowers to exotic food crops, fruits and vegetables, and common grains. I was also expected to maintain and keep on track the harvesting and production of edible flowers specifically for the chefs whenever they needed it in as large a quantity as they asked. When I was not taking care of my greenhouses I either was leading hour and a half tours through our greenhouse or working with guests out front to answer any plant questions they might have.

By far the biggest skills I learned was the ability to talk to large group of guests, and patience. Coming in the only way you could get me to give a talk in front of anyone was to threaten me with a failing grade. Or bribe me with cookies. Now at the end of this internship, I can talk just about anything to anyone. I have no idea how Disney managed to

turn me into a confident public speaker, but magically they did. I am very grateful for that. Now patience I thought I had before I started this internship, but I have found that while for most jobs that reserve would’ve been sufficient, Disney required an entirely different level. I have

learned how to calmly handle guests in all their variable moods while still providing quality service. No I was not good at this to begin with.



Disney was a wonderful host. They made sure living arrangements were taken care of by providing lots of information of available places to live. They also sent multiple emails detailing what to expect, what to pack, where to go, and how to arrive in one piece. As a company they did a very thorough job of training me so I knew how to act, what the company stands for and represents. They also taught me about how corporations work and the chain of command I would need to use if problems should arise. My manager entrusted me with the greenhouses and allowed me free reign to do whatever I so wished. I was allowed to conduct research on the propagation of roses in tropical climate, and incorporating trace elements into their fertilizing program.

When I first started one of the problems that Disney experienced was an inability to get rose cuttings to take. They had some new varieties they wanted to introduce into the greenhouse but due to their quarantine rules they couldn't use the stock plants and while they had been trying for a year to get some to take they had been unsuccessful up to this point. I told them I could get some to take if they also allowed me to do some experiments. I did a two-variable approach. They had up to this point been trying to root their roses in full sun with a woody hormone to encourage rooting. I ran two trials. The first with rose cuttings in both full sun and partial shade, to show them how less light would save sugars and increase rooting chances, and then another set in partial shade and shade with cooling. In school, I was taught that every time you drop the temperature by 10 degrees, the plant's metabolism drops by half. If I was to put these cutting in the cooler every night, the plant wouldn't be burning the energy it had made during the day, and theoretically I would have greater rooting success. Of the nine cuttings in each tray 3 would have no hormones, another 3 would have a woody hormone, and the last 3 a herbaceous hormone. At the end of the trial I found that by far and away the most effective treatment were the cuttings that were chilled, where over 50% survived, and surprisingly the no hormones applied cuttings rooted with the greatest success. Disney was pleased because previously they had only 2 rooted cuttings of roses and at the end of my experiments I had over 20 rooted cuttings ready to be grown out and moved to the greenhouse.



While interning, I was allowed to be in one of the segments for AFE's video explaining what the internship is and convincing both students and employers that this is something worth their time and effort to be a part of. Disney worked well with AFE to make this possible. I have done radio and newspaper interviews before, but this was my first video. Surprisingly I had lots of fun and learned a lot doing it even though it was in the middle of the park and guests were meandering around. AFE's team made sure I was comfortable and after a few takes I found myself enjoying the experience. The response to the video after its release has been very positive and I am happy I had the chance to promote AFE and the Vic and Margaret Ball Scholarship. Additionally, about a month ago Chris Manning from GIE Media contacted me through AFE asking to do a podcast for what AFE is and how the internship went. I was honored that I was chosen and I did my best to communicate how amazing AFE has been not only in the

placing of their interns all over the US, but how they invest in other scholarships so many students may benefit and find a home here in the industry.



Overall I have few complaints on how I was treated there. The managers were accommodating and warm, the company was as any would expect, and the other interns I had the chance to work with were wonderful. They came from all over the US, they have varied backgrounds and majors so I met people on this internship I never would have otherwise. Disney also allowed me to take a week off in order to fly up to accept the Perennial Plant Association's scholarship award early on in the internship. Company policy usually wouldn't have allowed me that time off but they valued my work and continued education so they allowed to me go. Again, no complaints about the company as a host.

This internship just confirmed for me that the path I am on right now is the right one. I thought going in that greenhouse production was something I wanted to do and coming out I verified this was the right decision. I love working in a greenhouse and while I would not want to work for the Disney company, I can easily see myself working at any major greenhouse production facility in the country for the production of bedding or floral crops. This internship did give me the push I needed to go back to school and apply for graduate school. I realized that while my Bachelor's would get me far, if I want to climb in a company I will need to know more. So now I'm looking towards furthering my education so I might be a greater asset to the industry and whatever company I eventually decide to work for.

As I finished this internship I wanted to sincerely thank AFE and the Vic and Margaret Ball family. Not only for establishing this scholarship so students like myself can not only discover if they enjoy the industry, but helping to provide funding for that last semester of collage. Thanks to this scholarship I can go back to school and take on two research positions when ordinarily I would need to take a part time job instead. You have allowed me to pursue what I truly enjoy doing and I cannot thank you enough for it. AFE I thank you for making this opportunity possible. Without your connections within the industry and your assurance that where we are placed is both safe and educational, I would not have applied. Your continued push towards giving back to the industry and the next generation of students is inspiring and I cannot thank you enough for the investment into myself that you have made. I shall do my utmost to make you proud. Thank you so very much.

