



Vic & Margaret Ball Internship Student Report

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I completed my Vic and Margaret Ball Internship at Silver Vase Inc. in Homestead Florida. This company specializes in growing Phalaenopsis, Vanda, and Dendrobium orchids. During my time at Silver Vase I interned under the companies Head Orchid Grower and held the position of Assistant Grower. Prior to my arrival this position had not been held by anyone in the company therefore part of my job was to record all of the work I completed on a day to day basis and eventually create a manual of my responsibilities/duties for any future employees hired into the position. With that being said my position evolved throughout the course of my six months in Florida and turned into a position that was beneficial for both myself and the company.

I began my internship by spending time shadowing the head grower and learning about all of the different aspects of the work that he completed on a day to day basis as well as spending time with the different departments to get an overall idea as to how the company ran as a whole. After getting accustomed to the company and what was expected of me much of my work was done independently. In an average week one of my main responsibilities was to walk through all of the twelve greenhouses on the property and record my observations which would then be reported to the head grower weekly. Some of the things that I would look for were any pests, diseases, issues in the root systems, problems/mutations with specific varieties, spike initiation/progress, and anything else that I found potentially problematic. I was also responsible for scheduling irrigations in all of the different houses and carrying them out as necessary as well as coordinating with the chemical sprayer on which houses needed sprayed and on what days the chemicals could/needed to be applied.

In addition to my duties as the assistant grower I also had a project that I worked on throughout my time at Silver Vase. I was responsible for creating a process manual over everything that went into their production cycle in addition to the manual I created over the assistant grower position. To do this I would spend most afternoons observing different areas of the production department and record all of the steps to any process that was being completed at that time. Production was split mainly into five departments or teams including planting, collaring, spacing/cooling, plant movement organization, and tying. The goal of this was to be able to observe where things could perhaps be done more efficiently or differently by implementing lean-flow into production. This could seem tedious at times however looking back now it was a really good way for me to learn about everything that went into production while also coming up new and improved ways that processes could be completed.

Throughout my time at Silver Vase the employees of the company ended up becoming a second family to me. This was so nice to have when experiencing life halfway across the country from where I grew up. My time at Silver Vase challenged me and exposed me to

different cultures. Spanish was the language spoken in the production department and not being fluent definitely presented its challenges however in the end I became a stronger communicator as a result of this and improved on my Spanish. I couldn't have asked for a better host company for my Ball internship and I would highly recommend any future recipients of the scholarship to share their internship experience with this company.

Prior to my internship I knew I was interested in horticulture and floriculture but was not necessarily sure of what kind of job I would want to seek after I graduated. This experience settled any doubts I had on whether or not I chose the right program to study as well as narrowing down the type of career I would like to pursue after school. When seeking a job I would like to go into a career as a grower. Ideally I would like to end up in Florida growing orchids and tropical plants however I would not limit my sights to only this and will keep an open mind to any other opportunities I encounter in the future.

This internship impacted my education greatly by giving me real life experience in the industry that you just can't get in the classroom. This experience gave me a new appreciation for the courses I have completed prior to my internship as well as a new perspective and focus upon my return to school.

In conclusion, this was a life-changing experience that taught me so much not only just about a career in production but also about myself. I would highly recommend this internship program to any of my peers considering a career in production and am so thankful that one of my fellow classmates recommended it to me. The support I have received from the American Floral Endowment is so greatly appreciated and I cannot stress enough how grateful I am to have been selected for this scholarship.