Internship at Welby Gardens, Denver, CO
6 months

The Welby Gardens main facility is located approximately five miles north of downtown Denver, CO, and serves as the central hub for the company’s business and production. There are a total of three greenhouse production facilities within Welby Gardens, a second in north Denver and third farther west of the metro area, along with a main sales office and two retail stores. The company specializes in wholesale bedding plant production and has been growing plugs, liners, finished annuals and perennials for over four decades. The six month internship began working at the Welby main facility and ended learning about vegetative propagation at the company’s young plant program.

Upon arriving in late May, the first activity to be performed was to prepare the trial plants for summer planting. Welby Gardens displays a trial garden in a two acre field behind the main facility each year, and the first job for interns is to prune the new selected cultivars. The second step, after a month of pruning, was to finish making the tags and labels used to identify the different varieties in the field. Once summer had set in and rain seemed unlikely, the field had to be plowed and all trial material transplanted into the ground. Other than tending to trial garden responsibilities, the internship involved a full tour and explanation of how the production occurred at the main facility, plant order pulling, weeding, herbicide application, and record keeping. After two months of work at the Welby Garden Main, the internship transferred over to the propagation facility.

The young plant and propagation facility, referred to as the West location, also lies in the north Denver area. Since arriving at a slow period for liner production, initial duties involved sweeping, cleaning, and disinfecting large areas of empty greenhouse production space as well as moistening Oasis trays for the rooting of Poinsettia cuttings. As time progressed responsibilities switched to taking care of the Cyclamen crop grown in 4 inch containers at the facility. Skills learned from this portion of the internship contained fertilizer applications and calculations, chemical applications and calculations, injector use, practical on-site soil analysis, various growing techniques and a lot of watering experience. Becoming a growing assistant was probably the most beneficial portion of the internship. During the early Fall the Cyclamen began to sell as orders to Texas, in which an education in shipping was learned, and liner production increased. The internship switched to helping another grower propagate un-rooted cuttings and develop liners. There was a lot of work with setting mist boom programs, controlling environmental systems, moving plants to different stages in production, and water management. This second half of the internship was the most valuable time spent and provided a great opportunity to take technical information learned through coursework and apply it to commercial growing. While working with the propagation grower we worked on many chemical spraying techniques and recorded the effects of various fungicide and PGR applications.
The company CEO, Al Gerace, was incredibly generous as a host. He answered all questions concerning the business and aided in the developing of my growers technique. Apart from work I was given tours of the Colorado countryside and mountains and experienced a few Denver highlights al at the company’s expense. The other employees that were encountered at Welby Gardens were equally as friendly and helpful in regards to the internship. The personnel involved around this company had a huge influence on the positive outcome of this experience.

One major benefit of this internship was being able to witness how the technical information on plant growth and behavior learned through coursework can be applied to a commercial setting and become incorporated into business at a large scale. The impressiveness of how an operation of this scale actually works has struck me as remarkable. I now have a new outlook on the floriculture industry and obtain a new desire to become involved. Plans for the future include working for commercial greenhouse operations and developing skills as a grower. It also remains a personal goal to involve others around me and to help those interested in becoming active in the green industry.