

# Twenty Students Awarded AFE Scholarships

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ALEXANDRIA, VA – July 15, 2022 –

The [American Floral Endowment \(AFE\)](#) has awarded 20 students with scholarships totaling \$54,400. In this 2022 scholarship cycle, which introduced a brand-new online application platform, 65 applications were received from over 40 colleges and universities. The Endowment would like to give a special thank you to the 47 industry members who reviewed and scored the applications.

AFE is aware the floral industry faces significant and ongoing challenges to our labor force. Now more than ever, these programs are imperative in helping support new professionals as they prepare to enter the industry workforce and launch a successful career. With these scholarship opportunities, we are keeping floriculture and horticulture competitive with other career paths by granting avenues for financial support ensuring that the industry can continue to attract and retain new students.

Please join with the Endowment in congratulating, supporting, and empowering these future industry leaders. Learn a bit about their career goals and what they see for the future of our industry!

## Julio and Sarah Armellini Scholarship – \$2,700

## Suntory Flowers Scholarship – \$2,000

Recipient: **Landon Erbrick**, *Auburn University*

Landon Erbrick is a Junior and Undergraduate Research Assistant at Auburn University and has conducted research impacting ornamental horticulture, including the nursery and greenhouse industries. He has a great interest in nursery and greenhouse production. On his career goals, Erbrick notes, “No matter where I end up after Auburn, I know one thing for certain: I want to have the opportunity to work hands-on in the production or research field, continuously gaining valuable knowledge and experience.” He is passionate about the floral industry and looks forward to sharing his passion with others. “As a horticulture major, I plan to carry determination, work ethic, and excellence with me into my career,” adds Erbrick.



When asked about the impact that these scholarships will have on his education and career, Erbrick said, “These scholarships help remove some of the financial burden from my shoulders and allow me to focus even more on my grades and undergraduate research.”

### About the Scholarships:

Julio “Toots” Armellini was the founder of Armellini Express Lines, the largest flower carrier service in the U.S. Armellini enlisted in the Navy as a “Seabee” and was stationed all around the globe as a mechanic, where he learned the skills he used to modernize refrigerated trucking. [Armellini Logistics](#) was started in 1945. When he began expanding his lines in the early 1950s, refrigeration was new and underdeveloped, so he established a more effective way of cooling his supplies using a system of constant airflow. ThermoKing eventually made his contributions to refrigeration systems standards. Today, Armellini Logistics encompasses many businesses: Armellini Express Lines, Inc., J.A. Flower Service, Armellini Freight Brokerage, Armellini Air Express, and Dash Mobile Storage. Established by Julio and Sarah before their passing, the **Julio and Sarah Armellini Scholarship** is intended for sophomore, junior or senior students with a career interest in the marketing or distribution of floral products.

Based in Japan, [Suntory Flowers](#) is a world-class breeding company dedicated to innovation and enriching people's lives by creating a world that's alive with flowers. Suntory's guiding philosophy and passion is "Yatte Minahare" – the spirit of bold ambition to dream big, take challenges and never give up. This means challenging conventional methods and striving to make the impossible possible, like creating the first blue rose or revolutionary new crops, such as Surfinia petunias, Sun Parasol mandevillas, and Million Bells calibrachos. Let's inspire the next generation to dream big and go for it with the "Yatte Minahare" spirit while contributing to the growth of our industry. **Suntory Flowers Scholarship** is intended for junior or senior undergraduate students attending a two- or four-year institution, with a demonstrated focus on a career in floriculture or ornamental horticulture breeding or production, with a passion for exploration in developing new and innovative floral products.

### **Ball Horticultural Company Scholarship – \$1,300**

### **Dewar Family Scholarship – \$2,200**

Recipient: **Nathan James**, *Colorado State University*

Nathan James is a Senior at Colorado State University majoring in Horticultural Science. His passion for plant care began during childhood, and he carried it into his education. "Throughout my educational journey, I have been lucky enough to get hands-on experience with a variety of coursework pertaining to the health and wellbeing of plants and the organisms within their system. Now four years into college, I have gained a unique education focus on the applied sciences of horticulture-related crops," reflects James. Continuing onward from the Michigan State University, where he gained a certificate in Fruit and Vegetable Crop Management, he hopes to gather valuable information in the plant genetics and plant physiology fields along with finding a suitable career in the industry.



When looking to the future of the floral industry, James notes, "My vision of the floriculture, horticulture, or green industry within the next twenty years is to have businesses think about the effects that the environment is facing and practice more sustainable methods within the industry. Through these actions, growers, traders, retailers, organizations, and governments could join forces in creating a more sustainable and healthier world for all generations."

#### **About the Scholarships:**

[Ball Horticultural Company](#) is a leading international breeder, producer, and wholesale distributor of floriculture products. Ball brings the beginnings of color, foliage, fruit, and form to professional growers around the world for the retail and landscape markets. The **Ball Horticultural Company Scholarship** is intended for junior or senior students pursuing a career in commercial floriculture.

The newly established **Dewar Family Scholarship** is awarded to an undergraduate student in their junior or senior year, studying environmental horticulture with an emphasis and focus on a career in floriculture. The fund is established by the Dewar Family of [Dewar Nurseries](#). Dewar Nurseries was established in 1963 by founder Alex Dewar, with the vision of providing premier plants and exemplary customer service. The Dewar Family appreciates the value of a quality education and is excited to encourage young professionals to enter floriculture production and business with this scholarship.

## Harold Bettinger Scholarship – \$2,500

Recipient: **Madilyn Hoock**, *Southern Illinois University*

Madilyn Hoock is a Sophomore at Southern Illinois University studying Horticulture with minors in Agribusiness and Agricultural Education. Her focuses range from vegetable production to cut flower and pollinator flower production. She is also interested in the production of landscape perennials as well. With an entrepreneurial spirit, she has already begun to produce products for the public. Hoock states, “My work in horticulture started out when I was young, but it kept growing. In the last two years, I began my own vegetable production to sell at farmers' markets, along with floral arranging and potted house plants, some from a local grower, and some propagated by myself.”



When sharing her future goals, Hoock notes, “My career goal is to one day become an extension agent or educator in Tennessee, specifically in Horticulture or 4-H education.” The Harold Bettinger Scholarship will impact and support not only Hoock’s education but the education of future generations through Hoock’s teaching.

### About the Scholarship:

Harold Bettinger was a partner in [Bettinger Farms](#) of Swanton, Ohio. In the mid-'50s, he was one of the first progressive growers to convert his bedding plant production from wooden to plastic flats. Bettinger Farms now grows greenhouse and field vegetables. The **Bettinger Scholarship** is intended for horticulture students, sophomore through graduate levels, who have a major or minor in business and/or marketing with the intent to apply their education to a horticulture-related career business.

## BioWorks IPM/Sustainable Practices Scholarship - \$2,000

Recipient: **Elizabeth Hudgens**, *Clemson University*

Elizabeth Hudgens is a Junior and Undergraduate Research Assistant at Clemson University majoring in Horticulture. She is interested in greenhouse production of ornamental plants, cut flower production, and garden caretaking. Hudgens notes her experiences in these fields, stating, “I have had the opportunity to participate in research on the day-length effect on poinsettias, and this summer, I have an internship lined up at [Rock Cobble Farm](#) in cut flower production and vegetable & ornamental garden care.” She aims to have a diversified career experiencing the many aspects of greenhouse production and hopes to one day become a head grower. Hudgens adds, “My biggest goal after I have explored the world of horticulture and have settled down is to have my own greenhouse.” She wants to be able to ultimately give back to her local community through her love of plants.



In looking ahead to the future of our industry, Hudgens states, “I hope to practice horticulture sustainably in my small business and think that being more environmentally friendly is very important to the future. With the support of this scholarship, I have the wonderful opportunity to take a Sustainable Landscaping class in the fall and hope to further my knowledge and be able to use what I learned when creating gardens of my own in the future.”

### About the Scholarship:

The **BioWorks IPM/Sustainable Practices Scholarship** is intended for sophomore, junior or senior students pursuing a career in floriculture. Students will be selected on the basis of sound academic performance and a grade point average of 3.0 or higher. While not mandatory, it is strongly desired that the student be interested in furthering the use of

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) or sustainable practices, and preference will be given in this area. [BioWorks](#) helps customers in the horticulture and specialty agriculture markets successfully deliver crops to market with biologically based solutions and support.

### **James Bridenbaugh Memorial Scholarship – \$500**

Recipient: **Samera Roe**, *Oklahoma State University*

Samera Roe is a Sophomore at Oklahoma State University studying Public Horticulture. She is specifically interested in tropical horticulture as well as a sustainable approach to garden design. Her focus on horticulture began at a young age; Roe recalls, “Nature was the backdrop of my upbringing long before I came to know it in a professional sense. I was raised overseas in Indonesia, a biodiverse archipelago. My fascination with plants began with a simple desire to know what was growing around me, and I found deep personal pleasure in recognizing plants that I knew the names of.”



Roe is passionate about exploring the relationship between geographic areas and their native flora. When asked about her future career goals, Roe notes, “After receiving my Undergraduate Degree from Oklahoma State, I would like to gain some experience working in either a botanical garden or a Nursery. I have two career paths that I'm currently considering: One being botanical garden work as well as research in native plant preservation and the second being working towards one day owning and managing a large-scale nursery.” She intends to use internship experiences and her time at college to get a feel for which of these paths will be best for her.

#### **About the Scholarship:**

Jim Bridenbaugh was a specialist in fresh flowers and plants, designing and commentating at design shows and seminars. His floral industry knowledge, comedic storytelling, and audience rapport made him a favorite. Jim served as OFA president from 1989 to 1991. The **Bridenbaugh Scholarship** is for sophomore, junior, or senior students who are pursuing a career in floral design and marketing of fresh flowers and plants.

### **John Carew Memorial Scholarship – \$2,400**

Recipient: **Manjot Sidhu**, *Michigan State University*

Manjot Sidhu is a Ph.D. student and Research Assistant at Michigan State University. Sidhu has a special interest area in weed management for containerized ornamental crop production in nurseries and greenhouses. Sidhu states, “My research focus is on developing an integrated weed management system for liverwort by various approaches including mulching, strategic fertilizer placement, allelopathy, and organic/inorganic chemical application.”



Sidhu’s goal is to become a scientist with research, extension, and teaching components. She adds, “I want to inspire and teach future scientists. My position as a research assistant at Michigan State University provides me with various opportunities such as carrying out research projects, teaching assistance, and taking part in extension activities, which is preparing me for my future endeavors in the field of horticulture.” She believes that mastering the technologies in ornamental plant production, weed science and management, and plant biology will allow her to run a practical and applied horticultural research program in the future.

### About the Scholarship:

John Carew, former head of the Department of Horticulture at Michigan State University, dedicated his career to encouraging and guiding young horticulturists. He was instrumental in establishing Bedding Plants International (BPI) in 1969. The **Carew Scholarship** is open to graduate students in horticulture with an interest in greenhouse crops.

### Carlson-Johnson Scholarship for Nontraditional Students – \$1,500

Recipient: **Jessica Esplin**, *Bastyr University*

Jessica Esplin is a Junior at Bastyr University studying Herbal Science and Studio Art. She is currently focused on native plants of the Colorado Plateau, herbs, and heirloom vegetables. Next, she will be moving into Pacific Northwest natives, pollinators, and landscape ornamentals. Over the last two years, she has put her passion for horticulture to work through her roles as Horticulturalist and Research Assistant at the [Arboretum at Flagstaff](#).



Her goal is to use this scholarship to further her education to live a healthy, more comfortable life and be a part of something bigger than herself through our industry. Regarding her future career goals, Esplin states, “I would like to develop a business that promotes and consults individuals and businesses to plant native pollinator species in their gardens as well as heirloom vegetables rather than cultivars – providing holistic landscaping services and education while actively growing such plants in gardens and greenhouses.”

### About the Scholarship:

Barbara Carlson, along with her husband Will, were instrumental in the establishment of Bedding Plant International (BPI) trade association, which served hundreds of growers. Fran Johnson enjoyed a long, productive career with the John Henry Co., a horticultural printing firm in Lansing, Mich. Fran also made many significant and practical contributions of time and talent through BPI to advance the greenhouse industry. The **Carlson-Johnson Scholarship for Nontraditional Students** is awarded to students re-entering school after a minimum three-year absence who have an interest in bedding and/or floral crops.

### Earl Dedman Memorial Scholarship – \$2,400

### Ferriss Horticulture Scholarship – \$2,400

Recipient: **Zachary Rosenkrans**, *Kansas State University*

Zachary Rosenkrans is a Senior and Lab Assistant at Kansas State University, finishing up his degree in Horticulture with an emphasis on production. He is highly interested in growing ornamentals and cut flowers for use in public gardens and designs. As an out-of-state student, he relies heavily on scholarships to complete his education, stating, “Receiving this scholarship from AFE relieves some weight from my shoulders and pressure to take on additional jobs instead allowing me to focus more on my studies.”

“After college, I plan to enter the world of greenhouse production or botanical garden management. In my endeavors, I hope to explore marketing tactics, promote environmentally responsible practices, and grow high-quality plants,” notes Rosenkrans. One of his favorite things about being a horticulturalist is watching and caring for plants as they develop. “At the end of the day, I plan to share the joy that plants give me and help reconnect society with nature.”



### About the Scholarships:

Earl Dedman owned and operated Mountainview Greenhouses in Woodinville, Wash., and was a former president of Bedding Plants International (BPI)'s Foundation. In addition to his participation with BPI, Earl was involved with the Montana State Flower Growers, the Puget Sound Flower Growers, and the Washington Floricultural Association. Educated in rural Montana in a one room schoolhouse, Earl had a strong commitment to education, believing it was a great way better yourself. Earl considered education and hard work to be the keys to success in life. The **Earl Dedman Scholarship** is awarded to junior or senior students who are interested in becoming greenhouse growers.

The **Ferriss Horticulture Scholarship** will be awarded annually to an undergraduate student entering their junior or senior year who is majoring in Horticulture or Plant Sciences, with a career interest in herbaceous ornamental plants and floriculture industry. Preference will be given to students who have a demonstrated interest in commercial greenhouse production of herbaceous ornamental or floriculture crops (i.e., non-edible, non-medicinal crops), research related to the production, physiology, or breeding of herbaceous ornamental and floriculture crops, and/or the sales and marketing of herbaceous ornamental and floriculture crops.

The scholarship honors and recognizes Dr. Terry Ferriss, who retired in 2015 from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls (UWRF), after 36 years of teaching. She was the first tenured female faculty member in the College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences at UWRF; the first woman to serve as the Plant and Earth Sciences Department chair, and the first woman to serve as an associate dean for the college.

### Garcia Family Scholarship – \$1,800

Recipient: **Abigail Dame**, *Brigham Young University Idaho*

Abigail Dame is a Senior and Teaching Assistant at Brigham Young University Idaho studying Horticulture. Her current focus is on landscape design with an emphasis on interior landscape design. Dame states, "I am striving to start my own interior plant design and installation business to bring the beauty of plants indoors. This area has so much potential for growth and possibilities to bring others joy with the love of living growth around them."

As a part of the floral industry, Dame believes, "We are in charge of creating beauty while keeping the beauty for the future." She hopes to bring green to urban environments and teach others about the benefits and happiness that green growth brings. "The green industry is in the line of work of happiness. We imagine, create, and deliver happiness for a living."

### About the Scholarship:

The **Garcia Family Scholarship** is intended for students attending a two-year college, or Junior or Seniors attending a four-year institution with a career focus on the marketing or distribution of floral products, including retail, wholesale, manufacturing, and/or floral business ownership/operations. The Garcia Family has proudly served the floral industry since 1965. Owned by the Garcia family, Garcia Group, Inc. operates six different divisions: Floral-Pak® Company; Plus One Imports™; Garcia Group Glass—Floraglas® and G3® brand products; Vase D'Lite® and Premium Wood Picks. All are represented exclusively by the Pete Garcia Company™ THE BEST LINES IN THE WORLD®.



## Long Island Flower Growers Association (LIFGA) Scholarship – \$1,700

Recipient: **Marina Millan**, *SUNY Farmingdale*

Marina Millan is a Senior at SUNY Farmingdale studying Ornamental Horticulture. On campus, she assists with landscaping through caring for garden beds, mulching, pruning, watering, edging, and weeding. She is interested in floral wholesale/distribution, development through seedbed preparation of ornamentals, and improving neglected landscapes through maintenance.

Millan notes, “I was attracted to the horticulture field because it gave me a sense of optimism.” With her degree, she is working to become a greenhouse grower. She hopes to work with perennials and annuals in a year-round greenhouse in zone 7. Millan notes that her desire to work in the industry is so that, “I may continue to be inspired by watching the process of growth.”

### About the Scholarship:

The **LIFGA scholarship** was established in 2010. LIFGA members represent growers and retailers promoting research, education, and sales of ornamentals in the local market. The LIFGA scholarship is intended for students in the Long Island/New York area studying ornamental horticulture at a community college or a four-year institution.

## Long Island Flower Growers Association – Bob Gunther Scholarship – \$1,400

Recipient: **Dante Spielmann**, *SUNY Cobleskill*

Dante Spielmann is a Senior at SUNY Cobleskill studying Plant Science. He is most interested in ornamental and food crop production, plant breeding, and wildflowers' impact on our ecosystems. Spielmann shares his broad experience in the industry stating, “During my time at college, I have conducted various experiments and research. Outside of school, I have worked as an Agriculture Stewardship Technician, where I helped maintain field experiments and collected soil and crop data. Most recently, I have had the opportunity to work under Dr. Mark Bridgen and help maintain the ornamental flower breeding plots at the Cornell Cooperative Extension.”

“In the future beyond academics, I hope to work in the Horticulture industry in a position where I can help growers expand and diversify their operations,”

Spielmann notes about his future goals. He hopes to help communities by offering quality ornamental and food crops.

### About the Scholarship:

The **Long Island Flower Growers Association – Bob Gunther Scholarship** was established in memory of the late Bob Gunther, owner of Gunther’s Greenhouses & Florist in Oceanside, New York. It is intended for students from Long Island and New York who are studying ornamental horticulture at a community college or four-year institution in New York. This includes floriculture, landscape maintenance, landscape design, turf, and any other courses of study related to ornamental horticulture. One student will be awarded this scholarship annually.

Robert Edward “Bob” Gunther was treasurer for LIFGA for many years and instrumental in the establishment of LIFGA’s first scholarship. Gunther received the Lifetime Achievement Award from LIFGA, where he also served as a board



member. He and his brother Fred took over the family business after his father passed away in 1969. Bob ran the business up until the time of his passing in 2015 at the age of 85.

### **Richard T. Meister Scholarship – \$4,900**

Recipient: **Brandan Shur**, *North Carolina State University*

Brandan Shur is a Graduate Research Assistant at North Carolina State University's Horticultural Substrates Lab pursuing his Master's of Science in Horticulture. His research will focus on soilless substrate production of ornamental and edible greenhouse/nursery-produced crops. He notes, "My main emphasis will be evaluating different soilless substrate components and formulations on controlled strawberry and other soft fruit production. In particular, my project will have a heavy focus on further understanding the potential of engineered wood fiber substrates in soilless cultivation systems."



Inspired by his undergraduate research position with Dr. Brian Jackson, Shur states, "The future of soilless plant cultivation cannot be reliant on the same products and practices of the past that are now known to not be as environmentally, socially, or economically sustainable as we once thought. Investigation into new soilless substrates and growing practices that are more localized and sustainable is of great interest to me and has a major benefit to all fields within our industry."

#### **About the Scholarship:**

Richard "Dick" T. Meister built a family business in publishing for specialized growers in commercial horticulture. He was a strong supporter of the land-grant college system and, through the years, worked closely with many horticultural and floricultural leaders. He passed in 2020, but this scholarship continues to honor his memory. This scholarship is dedicated to the outstanding accomplishments of those in university extension and especially to Will Carlson in floriculture. The **Meister Scholarship** is open to graduate students in floriculture intending to pursue their career in the land-grant university system with an interest in research, extension, or teaching.

### **National Greenhouse Manufacturers Association (NGMA) Scholarship – \$700**

Recipient: **Parker Dearing**, *North Carolina State University*

Parker Dearing is a Senior at North Carolina State University studying Horticulture Science with a concentration in Production Systems and Entrepreneurship. He is interested in herbaceous perennials and growing cut flowers. For his future goals, Dearing states, "I hope to one day open my own plant nursery that sells ornamental and cut flowers." His goal is to do this in his hometown of Monroe, NC, so that he can provide jobs and boost the local economy. "Being the motivated person that I am, this scholarship will not only help a student pay for college, but it will be a part of starting a small business."



Additionally, Dearing notes, "I would also like to start a nonprofit organization that works with the plant nursery to provide assistance and horticulture therapy to people with special needs. The special needs community is close to my heart because of my special needs brother."

### About the Scholarship:

The [National Greenhouse Manufacturers Association \(NGMA\)](#) is a professional trade organization for the manufacturers and suppliers of greenhouses and greenhouse components built to codes designed for a grower's needs. The **National Greenhouse Manufacturers Association Scholarship** targets students majoring in horticulture and bioengineering or the equivalent and are at least a junior at an accredited four-year college.

### Mike and Flo Novovesky Scholarship – \$3,400

Recipient: **Jessica McCool**, *Colorado State University*

Jessica McCool is a Junior at Colorado State University studying Horticulture and Business Management. Currently, she works as the Production Manager for woody shrubs and trees at Little Valley Wholesale Nursery. She aspires to become the Nursery Manager there.

Reflecting on the gift of the scholarship, McCool notes, "AFE has supported me with a generous scholarship to fund my education. Without the opportunities American Floral Endowment has provided me, I would not be as successful in the horticulture industry today. Much of my education has been driven by funds I have received from organizations such as AFE. I am forever grateful for their support!"



### About the Scholarship:

Mike and Flo Novovesky have enjoyed more than 30 years of active participation in the floriculture industry. The Novoveskys know first-hand the hardships a young couple must overcome when balancing a career and a family. The **Novovesky Scholarship** aims to help young married students who are working to put themselves through college. Depending on the availability of married applicants, the scholarship may also go to an undergraduate working his or her way through school with financial need and family obligations. The keys are strong interest in horticulture and financial need.

### James K. Rathmell, Jr. Memorial Scholarship for Horticultural Work/Study Abroad – \$4,600

Recipient: **Tiana Clevenger**, *University of Idaho*

Tiana Clevenger is a Senior at the University of Idaho studying Horticulture & Urban Gardening. Clevenger shares, "I've had many different experiences within the horticulture industry that have shaped my career goals. In my current job with the University, I work with tissue culture techniques. I can envision myself continuing in this field or possibly becoming a small business owner. My dream is to create a zero-waste system that produces beautiful and healthy flowers."

The scholarship that Clevenger is receiving will help her to achieve her goal of studying abroad in Uruguay. "I've taken Spanish language courses since I was a high school freshman in preparation for studying abroad. It has always been a long-term goal of mine to be completely fluent. I plan to study Uruguay's local agriculture and gain knowledge about the plant industry. This scholarship will aid me in my pursuit to better understand the world and gain invaluable experience in my career field," states Clevenger.



**About the Scholarship:**

Jim Rathmell was a horticulture extension specialist at Penn State University who promoted communication and cooperation with horticulturists in other countries. A widely published author, he worked with commercial growers to implement many outstanding educational programs. The **Rathmell Scholarship** is awarded to junior or senior-level undergraduates or graduate students who have a specific plan for horticulture work/study outside of the U.S.

**Seed Companies Scholarship – \$2,900**

Recipient: **Shara Ortiz Carvajal**, *Clemson University*

Shara Ortiz Carvajal is a master’s student at Clemson University studying Plant and Environmental Science. Her research tries to understand a physiological disorder in chrysanthemum plants and propose remediation actions. She hopes that the results will be helpful and applicable to other flower crops.

“As a researcher, my goal is always to work to help the industry understand the causes of daily and critical problems and how to solve them. Also, I would like to participate in the search for innovative ideas that could help create new approaches that could improve the industry,” states Ortiz.



**About the Scholarship:**

The seed companies Ball, Pan-American, Goldsmith, and Syngenta are leaders in the seed production and breeding industry, providing new, improved varieties. These seed companies cooperatively sponsor this scholarship. The **Seed Companies Scholarship** requires students to have a career goal within the seed industry and be junior or senior level undergraduates or graduate students.

**John L. Tomasovic, Sr. Scholarship – \$1,700**

Recipient: **Sophie Soto**, *Bergen Community College*

Sophie Soto is a Junior at Bergen Community College studying Horticulture. She has followed her passion for plant care into her career by working at Centre Ridge Garden Center. Her role there has grown over time from being a cashier to customer service, plant maintenance, pricing, inventory, and more. She hopes to bring this experience into her career post-graduation, noting, “My career goal is to open my own garden center one day with a florist shop attached.”

Soto is very grateful to be pursuing her education while also getting hands-on experience; she adds, “My knowledge in Horticulture has skyrocketed so much since starting at Bergen and has brought so many opportunities to me.”



**About the Scholarship:**

John Tomasovic, past president of Bedding Plants International (BPI)’s Foundation, grew his family business, [Tomasovic Greenhouses and Nursery, Inc.](#), in St. Louis, which includes a greenhouse from the 1904 St. Louis World’s Fair. They produce bedding plants, along with nursery stock, mums, poinsettias, and bulbs. Established before his passing in 2018, the **Tomasovic Scholarship** honors John Tomasovic and offers special consideration for sophomore, junior or senior undergraduate students with financial need.

## Edward Tuinier Memorial Scholarship – \$5,800

Recipient: **Seth Benjamin**, *Michigan State University*

Seth Benjamin is a Senior at Michigan State University studying Horticulture. He is also currently interning at [Neal Mast Greenhouses](#) as a grower. This internship is in line with his career goals to become a grower for a commercial greenhouse and eventually own a greenhouse of his own focusing on annuals and herbaceous perennials. Benjamin has been exposed to horticulture his whole life having grown up on a farm, and continues to seek out additional experiences to learn more.



When asked about the future of the industry, Benjamin reflected on the boom in houseplants and gardening through the pandemic noting, “I think that the green industry as a whole needs to capitalize on selling the benefits of what the green industry does for individuals and society emphasizing the impacts on health and mental wellbeing instead of just selling a product.”

### About the Scholarship:

Ed Tuinier, owner of [Post Gardens](#), loved the greenhouse business, building his firm to one of the top 50 U.S. companies and inspiring his children, all of whom work in one of the two Post Gardens locations. A graduate of Michigan State University, Ed was a major benefactor of the MSU horticulture program and demonstration gardens. The **Tuinier Scholarship** is awarded to sophomore, junior, or senior undergraduate students enrolled in the floriculture program at Michigan State University.

## Jacob and Rita Van Namen Marketing Scholarship – \$1,800

Recipient: **Ethan Jenkins**, *North Carolina State University*

Ethan Jenkins is a Senior at North Carolina State University studying Horticultural Science and Biological Science. His interest in horticulture was not immediate, “Although my father and grandfather were both avid farmers in my hometown, I never engaged in any hands-on experiences with plants until being involved with my local FFA chapter. I enrolled in a horticulture course and was instantly enamored by the benefit, breadth, and beauty of working with plants,” stated Jenkins.



This scholarship aligns directly with his career goals, Jenkins notes, “My goals are to use the marketing and business management skills I acquire during my research in my graduate studies to be able to successfully operate my own nursery business by implementing innovative marketing tactics and by better understanding my market.”

### About the Scholarship:

The **Jacob and Rita Van Namen Marketing Scholarship** was established in January 1997. Jacob Van Namen was a true entrepreneur who built a multimillion-dollar business in wholesale floriculture. Both Jacob and Rita Van Namen have passed after establishing this scholarship; this scholarship continues to honor and recognize their impact on industry. This award is intended to develop knowledgeable, creative individuals who will improve the floriculture industry. The

Van Namen Scholarship requires students to have a career interest in agribusiness marketing and distribution of floral products and be of sophomore, junior or senior standing.

## Vocational (Bettinger, Holden & Perry) Scholarship – \$1,800

Recipient: **Jeff Tiller**, *Piedmont Tech College*

Jeff Tiller is a Junior at Piedmont Tech College studying Horticulture. Currently, he also works in the industry for Greenwood Nursery, where he attends to the trees and shrubs and provides customer service. This scholarship is helping support his continued education while he also gains hands-on experience.

Tiller shares his future career goals, “My goal is to eventually own and operate a retail growing greenhouse. I plan to offer mostly exotic plants. I grew up on a small family farm with lots of experience with ‘working the land’ as my dad called it. I returned to school to gain more knowledge and experience about greenhouse growing. There is nothing quite like watching a tiny seed grow into a beautiful plant.”

### About the Scholarship:

The **Vocational (Bettinger, Holden & Perry) Scholarship** requires students to be in a one or two-year program with the intent to become a grower or greenhouse manager. The vocational scholarship awards a scholarship in honor of: LEONARD BETTINGER, who was a successful greenhouse grower in the [Bettinger Farms](#) family business in Toledo, Ohio, and was president of the Bedding Plants International (BPI) trade association from 1974-76; JOHN HOLDEN, who had a long, helpful career at [Ball Seed Co.](#) and was active in the BPI trade association since it’s inception, attending the very first “pre-BPI” conference in 1968; JIM PERRY, who was a respected wholesale nurseryman, who grew Perry’s Plants of La Puente, Calif., into one of the largest bedding plant operations in the U.S and was president of BPI from 1972-1974.



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More details on AFE scholarships are available at [endowment.org/scholarships](http://endowment.org/scholarships). AFE awards these scholarships annually, and all applications are due by May 1 of each year.