

Charles Crume

When I first arrived the main crop types I dealt with were organics. The organics mainly consisted of basil, assorted herbs, tomatoes, and strawberries. The other crops included but was not limited to, various petunia hanging baskets, geraniums, and zinnia. The main difference between the organics and the other crops was the organics had to use a much lower and more organic fertilizer than other normal floriculture crops.

About a month later we (slowly) moved into total mum production and rooting poinsettias. Up until the mums the main watering types we did was booms, hand watering, and sprinkler systems due to the varying crop types on each of the flood floors. Once mums came in, we could switch to flood floor watering system on the floors which had access to it (about half of the indoor facilities). During the mums I had to track heights of several different varieties in a greenhouse and make sure they were following the crop outline for the specific buyer they were going to. If the height was either too high or too low, we would apply a PGR to either slow or accelerate the growth. Twice a week I would also put out and take readings of sticky cards. They were used in identifying the different pest on the crops and whether they needed to be put under a control.

The poinsettias were dipped in 'Root & Grow' and stuck in soil with three to a pot in the first group. They were watered heavily after stick through booms with mister nozzles with frequent passes so that the water pressure would not be too great on the plants and knock them over. Fog is pumped in through nozzles near the top of the greenhouses and vents open at 25% capacity to reduce the amount of moisture leaving the greenhouse. The booms ran at a consistent rate to keep the cuttings wet so that they may root. Soon after stick, Cease Biological Fungicide is applied to decrease the chances of Botrytis and Erwinia, as well as used as a wetting agent to prevent water buildup on the leaves.

Around the same time as the beginning of the mums and poinsettias, the trial gardens were being planted/placed and would soon open. The trial gardens are two outside sections with a huge variety of mixed pots, single pots, hanging baskets, window baskets, and even in bed plants. The purpose of the trial gardens is to promote what NMG's products (or possible future products) would look like in a non-greenhouse environment to either show other growers at different companies or just to the public. Every summer growers in Michigan will

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take an East-West tour of the state and tour all the greenhouses that are on a set trail. NMG is on this tour. The gardens, however, are not just for others to benefit. NMG uses the garden as test to see what types of plants do poorly in a non-controlled environment, either due to pest or weather-related factors. This information is pertinent in figuring out which products people will buy due to the high quality of the crop.

Along with taking mum heights and taking sticky cards, I had to regularly make fertilizer and micronutrient tank mixes and clean filters from said tanks. The fertilizer and iron chelate based mix would, once injected into the line via injectors, however when this would happen the two would mix and aggregate together and clog the drippers of the two trial garden areas. The cleaning of the filters was very important as it kept the lines from clogging as much and caused less plants to be dry due to the clogged drippers when on the timers. I would have to walk the rows and rows of plants every morning and check for dry plants with clogged/broken drippers then water in the dry ones.

This internship program was amazing, and it was everything I could have hoped for and so much more! I have known I wanted to be a grower in a greenhouse for a while now and this internship strengthened that belief, and it made me understand what it takes. If any student were to ask me about the Vic and Margaret Ball internship program, I would tell them to do it. It was an amazing opportunity for me that I would have not traded for anything. The application online is pretty easy to find and very straightforward.

Overall NMG was an excellent host with a great housing location. It was all very tidy and clean. Everyone who worked there were super welcoming and open to answering any questions I had. I learned many valuable skills and would even consider working there if it were a bit closer to Texas. The experience I gained from NMG will help me build a (hopefully) long career as a grower.