My name is Mitchell Rawson and I had the great opportunity to intern at Green Circle Growers in Oberlin, Ohio. GCG did an excellent job hosting interns. They provided both a male and a female intern house free of charge. Along with providing free housing they also hosted several activities for the interns such as a day at Cedar Point, an amusement park.

GCG is split up into 4 separate plants that each grow different crops. I was able to spend time at each plant and learn about the different crops and different growing methods used at each one. Plant 1 and Plant 6 were the most similar greenhouses. They both grew seasonal flowering plants such as poinsettias, mums, geraniums, and gerbera daisies. Plant 2 was the biggest of all of the plants and it housed the houseplant, foliage, and seasonal plant production. Plant 4 was a monoculture greenhouse and they grew all of the Phalaenopsis Orchids.

While I was working in plants 1, 2, and 6 some of the work that I got to perform was setting up the greenhouse booms to water the various crops. This was a great opportunity to familiarize myself with operating greenhouse equipment. More specifically, I learned how to optimize the watering settings and use them on a set timer. Plant 2 also used subirrigation for several crops, and I was able to learn more about the process and control the subirrigation system to water the crops. Another important task that I was able to perform during my internship was checking for dry down. This was an important task to learn, because it determined when the crops would need watering; either by subirrigation or with overhead irrigation by the booms.

One of the main crops that I was able to help grow at plants 1 and 6 were poinsettias. During their production I would keep track of insect levels and put out beneficial insects, such as Encarsia formosa. These insects would keep harmful insects, such as whitefly, at acceptable population levels. This was a great skill to learn, because it greatly helped with my identification of different insects. Also as part of poinsettia production I was able to help mow the new poinsettia crops. This was an interesting process to learn about, as well as a valuable skill that I gained. The reason why we mowed the poinsettia crop was to ensure that the plant would remain compact and strong. Another skill that I obtained was the use of plant growth regulators via
spraying on poinsettias. I got the opportunity to practice the skill of spraying by applying a mixture of B9 and Cycocel.

During my time at Plant 4, I got to learn how to control the greenhouse environment, which was one of the more important skills that I gained. Because Plant 4 only grows Phalaenopsis Orchids, the environment needed to be controlled at a much greater level than the other greenhouses. There were many different factors of the greenhouse environment that I learned how to control. This includes: humidity, light levels, and temperature. Keeping the different factors between the set growing parameters despite the outside weather was one of the most interesting tasks I’ve completed at GCG. Another task that I got to perform during my time at plant 4 was helping to mix the fertilizer. I had gotten the chance to make my own fertilizer in class before, however it was really helpful to see how it is done on a larger scale.

Overall this scholarship and internship has had a huge impact on my education and future career. As this was my first time working in a wholesale greenhouse, I loved being able to implement the topics that had been covered in class and actually getting to experience and use them in real life. This internship will also help me in my future classes as I got to experience many tasks that have not yet been talked about in my courses. During my time at Green Circle Growers, it reaffirmed my love for horticulture and reassured me that I had chosen the right career. While I don’t have any set plans for when I graduate, I do know that I would like to work in a floriculture greenhouse, like Green Circle Growers.
This is a picture of some of the subirrigation tables that I got to run. These bonsai tables are getting ready to be shipped and I am using subirrigation to water them to ensure that they have plenty of water during the shipping process.
This picture shows the water that is being stored for use in watering after it has spent time in the retention ponds and been treated. In this picture I am grabbing a sample of the water for testing.
This picture was taken during my time at plant 4. I am trimming double spikes on the waterfall Orchids to ensure that there is only one big spike at the end that can be staked and turned into the perfect waterfall Orchid.
This picture shows me helping to run the poinsettia mower at plant 1. It had adjustable blade heights depending on the desired mow height and we pulled it over top of the poinsettia crop to help make them more compact and sturdier plants.
While I was at Plant 4 we would sometimes find animals that had managed to find their way inside the greenhouse, but could not find their way back out. This is a picture of me with a bird that I managed to catch before I safely released it outside of the greenhouse.