

## AFE Summer Intern Final Report

During my 3-month internship at Neal Mast Greenhouses, I gained many valuable experiences that have helped to grow my understanding of the greenhouse industry. Before arriving at Neal Mast, I had limited knowledge of what processes went into running and operating a wholesale greenhouse. Having an internship provided a unique opportunity for me to learn new skills while also gaining practical, hands-on experience. I was able to learn how Neal Mast treats and monitors pests and diseases while also growing in insect and disease identification. I was able to gain more understanding of how plant growth regulators (PGRs) work and when to use them. The use of PGRs is a skill that is taught in many classes, but I found it beneficial to see first-hand how plants react to specific plant regulators. Throughout the summer, I was shown the different methods in which to water plants and why we chose specific methods. I learned many interpersonal skills as I worked with the senior grower at my location, along with 5 other full-time growers. My responsibilities included managing the growth of 14inch mums in one of our greenhouse sections, as well as, helping to take care of the mums filling over 5 acres of outdoor space. I worked with the growers to make sure that each plant had the water and feed they needed every day. I also assisted with any chemical or Biological Control Agent (BCA) applications that were needed throughout the week. I was able to learn how to effectively use a chemical sprayer, as well as how to run a chemical drench through a hand-held hose and drip tape.

As a host, Neal Mast made sure that I was well taken care of by providing free housing, opportunities for new experiences, and placing me with knowledgeable growers. Having the ability to work under growers that had been in the industry for many years provided a unique and beneficial opportunity for me to learn more about what it looks like to work in a wholesale greenhouse. With each conversation I had, I was able to learn something new and I appreciated how my employers were quick to answer my many questions.

Going into the internship, I was eager to experience what growing at a large-scale, wholesale greenhouse was like. I looked forward to the opportunity because I had never experienced growing on such a large scale before. This internship provided a way for me to see if this was truly where I wanted to land in my career. Being at Neal Mast showed me that I do enjoy working in this industry, however, my interests have begun to shift more towards small-scale operations rather than large-scale.

As I think of the future, I would like to continue pursuing my passion for plants and explore the many opportunities that are offered in the greenhouse industry. This internship has been extremely beneficial and I believe that I will be able to take what I have learned and apply it to future jobs, my schooling, and even my daily life. I have found that an internship provides a unique opportunity to gain a broad view of a company while also learning the ins and outs of everyday plant maintenance. Because of this, I am grateful for the opportunity that the American Floral Endowment and Neal Mast helped to provide me as their summer intern.



**Learning Objectives:** The student and host employer mutually agree that this internship is an experiential learning situation that will enable the student to gain hands-on work experience to illustrate or reinforce academic learning.

**\*\*Employers are encouraged to assign an internship project to a student to complete during their internship.\*\***

**All three participating parties (student, faculty, and employer) should sign-off on the objectives to verify the agreement that these are the intended goals and expected outcomes of the internship.**

Please List Learning Objectives:

**6 or more objectives focused on the technical aspects and skills related to the discipline**

1. Learn in-depth the production requirements of the specific crops I will be working with, focusing on cultural practices and pest management.
2. Learn how Neal Mast manages insect pests and diseases (scouting and pest identification, use of biological control agents, and safe pesticide application when necessary).
3. Learn how to operate various equipment and automated processes.
4. Grow in taxonomy and plant ID, especially with the plants I am directly working with (record plant ID in journal).
5. Learn the criteria for when crops are shipped and quality control measures in place.
6. Develop skills in plant propagation, learning the processes and techniques required for successful propagation.

**4 or more objectives focused on business related issues and/or organizational functions**

1. Better understand the decisions that are made to keep a business running/well organized (come away with at least 1-3 problems that came up and the decisions that were made to reach a solution. (business/product/financial/marketing)
2. Learn the management hierarchy at Neal Mast and how the production in their multiple greenhouse operations is organized to improve efficiency
3. Gain experience in processes behind shipping and receiving orders.
4. Develop skills in marketing and learn how Neal Mast markets their business.

**3 or more objectives related to communication skills that seek for improvement (Includes Internals, external and interpersonal communications).**

1. Learn how to communicate effectively about needs, observations, and directions to colleagues.
2. Become more confident in answering questions, for example, by interacting with visitors at trials gardens.
3. Gain understanding in how Neal Mast values their customers and employees and creates a fun, welcoming, and hardworking atmosphere.

Student Signature: Olivia DeWolf Date: 5-06-2023

Faculty Signature: R. Williams Date: 5/10/2023

Employer Signature: [Signature] Date: 5/10/2023