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American Floral Endowment

Student Report

This past summer I was supported by the American Floral endowment to travel to Mt. Vernon, Washington to work for Skagit Horticulture as an intern. During my time at this internship I got to assist one of the growers at the operation in weekly tasks and other long term tasks, this included: regular pest checks and data entry, soil pH/EC testing, worker metric data analysis, updating a pesticide database, and a research experiment involving *Helleborus*. Additionally, I got to spend time performing plant maintenance, deploying beneficial mites and nematodes, and assisting other members of the Skagit team. During my work I got to listen to more experienced workers converse and watch how they would work, observation on a large scale was a big focus for me. I learn best when I can watch someone else perform a task and going into the field of Horticulture there are so many nuances to learn, so just getting to see individuals do work was very enlightening. In addition, I got to go into further detail learning about pesticides and good IPM management rotations specifically during my work organizing and updating a database. I would check chemicals that I was not familiar with and learn as much as I could about them and I was encouraged by the team to ask for help or take the time to learn myself. Skagit was such a wonderful company to work with, during my time there I was stationed in the logistics office. In that office were all the logistics folks as well as another grower and the head grower. This gave me even more opportunities to listen in on other aspects of the business I had not known about before as well as meet many different people either working for Skagit or not. Getting to work at this internship provided me with lots of opportunities to get hands on with different aspects of the operation, this really helped to reinforce my confidence in those areas as well as provide raw experience. The most exciting job I got to work on was by far the research project on *Helleborus*, this has really given me some direction in figuring out what I want to do long term. Research and development has always been of interest to me and getting to do research in the field that yielded an answer that resulted in a change was very rewarding to see in action. I'd love to pursue this more and learn more about the process to perform more effective experiments, especially as the industry changes more and more. Technology is advancing and with some very exciting new discoveries in engineering it could open up a lot of potential for new developments in sustainability within the industry. Moving forward I would really like to focus on exploring research more and centering on sustainability, I feel like there is so much potential to reduce or recycle the negative outputs of our industry and some of its practices. I felt like I learned so much this summer and even though it was challenging it was so rewarding to get new perspectives and ideas as well as meet so many amazing people.