

Maggie Whittington  
Final Internship Report

This summer, I interned at Mast Young Plants (aka Neal Mast Greenhouses) in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Before I got there, I was pretty nervous about the entire experience. Mainly that I wouldn't know as much as I thought I did, or that I wouldn't get along with any of the employees and other interns, or that I just wouldn't enjoy it as I had never worked in a greenhouse before. Fortunately, none of those fears became true! My experience at MYP truly exceeded my expectations as I learned so much about both the industry and myself, and I made connections with the people there. One great thing about interning at NMG was their intern house, which was free to the other interns and myself to live there and luckily we all got along really well and were able to find time to explore Michigan outside of work.



Above: I am in the middle of walking drip lines.

Some of my favorite aspects of the work included how dynamic day-to-day life is and how there's also something to do while not being overwhelming. I spent a lot of time this summer just walking around and visually monitoring the crops to make sure they were all getting watered properly and to check for any pest, disease, or nutrient issues. Once I started to get a good morning and weekly task routine, I was able to get more of a feel for what it is like to be a grower. I began each morning by watering and walking around my sections, and checking the nutrient tanks to see if they needed to be refilled. I also had weekly and semi-weekly tasks that I was responsible for like cleaning water filters, measuring mum heights and plotting them on graphs so that we can make decisions about PGR applications, and doing thorough walks around the crops to observe them more closely. Once I finished those tasks, I would shadow and help the other growers with things they needed to get done such as watering plants, transplanting, programming booms and climate software, applying chemical sprays and drenches, walking and fixing drip lines, replacing bug cards, and sometimes just walking around and talking about how things work. Throughout the summer, I rotated around different growers to shadow them and learn about what they do and their different methods of doing things. This helped me learn a wide range of skills that are needed all around the greenhouse, and being able to apply what I have learned so far in my degree was exciting.

These are both sections that I was in charge of monitoring, which included Echinacea (left) and Garden Mums (right).



The growers I worked with were really what made this experience so great. They were especially helpful and encouraging as they gave me updates on my work performance, including the positive reinforcement and constructively telling me how I could improve. We had weekly grower and production meetings to keep everyone updated on what is happening each week, which was cool for me to see the big picture of the work we were doing and to learn more about the jobs of people I didn't work with. I also had positive experiences with all of the administrative employees I interacted with. The other interns and I were able to have lunch with the owner of the company, which was interesting to hear about the origins and values of the company. Overall, NMG has a lot of really great employees who are supportive and work together as a team.

Since I had never worked in a wholesale greenhouse before, this internship truly had a huge impact on my education and future career decisions as I discovered that I genuinely enjoy working in a greenhouse and all the physical labor that comes with it, especially when I would come home feeling satisfied from working hard all day. MYP is definitely a company that I am considering working for in the future after the head growers told me that they would like to have me back after I graduate. I would definitely recommend this internship to other prospective students, and I would like to thank the Vic and Margaret Ball internship program and MYP/NMG for giving me such a great opportunity and wonderful experience.



Above: Many animals found their way into the greenhouse and needed help getting back out, like this American toad!

\*\*disclaimer: I am camera shy and did not get any pictures of me with the company sign or doing tasks :(