

Research Proposal

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

OAN NURSERY RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Date: October 13, 2023

Principal Investigators:

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Title: North Willamette Research and Extension Center nursery production internship

Collaborators:

Dalyn McCauley, Nursery Production Research Engineer, Oregon State University

Clint Taylor, Nursery Production Chief Horticulturalist, Oregon State University

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Background:

The nursery industry is in demand for new graduates who can apply critical thinking and are well-versed in nursery systems. To address this need, we propose revitalizing the Nursery Production Internship Program at the North Willamette Research and Extension Center (NWREC). This program, previously successful, offered hands-on experience to undergraduate and community college students in nursery production. At NWREC, the Nackley lab has established a nano-nursery across three acres, representing major production styles in Oregon nursery systems, including in-ground production, container, pot-in-pot, and greenhouse. Through practical exposure to these systems, students will gain skills in propagation, production, and pest management. The program's ties to research, extension activities, and collaboration with multi-state universities, coupled with on-site visits to Oregon nurseries and participation in industry events like the Far West trade show, ensure a unique and enriching educational experience not typically found in the classroom.

Project Objectives:

Our internship program at NWREC offers students a distinctive opportunity to gain hands-on experience in nursery production. The objectives are clear: to provide aspiring horticulturists, regardless of their prior experience, with practical exposure to the nursery industry.

Throughout the internship, students will acquire fundamental skills in plant propagation, cultivation, and management, mentored by experienced professionals with diverse skillsets. This experiential learning goes beyond textbooks, providing a profound understanding of the challenges and opportunities within the nursery sector. Furthermore, the program nurtures mentorship, builds networks, and fosters a sense of community, making it a comprehensive and transformative learning experience for these future horticultural leaders.

Methods and Timeline

Spring 2024

- **Position Description:** Create a detailed description of the internship position, including responsibilities, qualifications, and expectations.

- **Establish Application Process:** Set up an application process.
- **Promote the Internship:** Advertise the internship opportunity through various channels, such as university career centers, job boards, social media, and our organization's website.
- **Screen Applicants:** Review applications and resumes to shortlist potential candidates based on their qualifications and suitability for the role.
- **Interview Candidates:** Conduct interviews to assess candidates' skills, experiences, and overall fit for the internship.
- **Selection Process:** Select the most qualified candidates and inform them of their selection.

Summer 2024

- **Provide Orientation:** Plan and conduct an orientation for selected interns to familiarize them with our organization and the internship.
- **Offer Mentorship:** Assign a mentor or supervisor who will guide and support the interns during their tenure.
- **Establish Learning Objectives:** Define specific learning objectives and goals for the interns to achieve during their internship.
- **Training and Onboarding:** Provide training and onboarding to familiarize interns with company policies, procedures, and any necessary tools or technologies.
- **Evaluate Performance:** Implement a system for evaluating intern performance, and provide feedback for their professional growth.
- **Feedback and Improvement:** Gather feedback from both interns and supervisors to continuously improve the internship program.
- **Engagement and Networking:** Encourage interns to engage with the organization's employees and network with professionals.
- **Project Assignments:** Provide interns with meaningful projects and responsibilities that align with their learning objectives.
- **Final Evaluation:** Assess intern performance at the end of the program and offer recommendations or references as needed.
- **Exit Process:** Organize an exit process, including feedback sessions and guidance for interns on their future careers.

The Benefit to Nursery Industry

This research project aims to offer practical solutions to these challenges, thereby improving houseplant cultivation practices and contributing to the continued growth of this thriving market.

Budget Total	\$8,500
• Student summer wages	\$8000
• Supplies	\$500
○ Personal protective equipment (\$500)	