

Research Proposal

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

OAN NURSERY RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Date: August 30, 2024

Title: North Willamette Research and Extension Center **nursery production internship**

Principal Investigators:

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Collaborators:

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Background:

The nursery industry faces a growing demand for new graduates who possess critical thinking skills and are well-versed in nursery systems. To address this need, we propose continuing the Nursery Production Internship Program at the North Willamette Research and Extension Center (NWREC). We appreciate the many years of support for this program, which provides hands-on experience to undergraduate and community college students in nursery production. At NWREC, the Nackley Lab has established a nano-nursery spanning three acres, showcasing major production styles in Oregon nursery systems, including in-ground production, container, pot-in-pot, and greenhouse. This practical exposure will equip students with essential skills in propagation, production, and pest management.

The program has consistently supported 2-3 students per year, except during the COVID years. Many past interns have entered the nursery industry and credited their experience with making them more comfortable with agricultural work. The program's integration with research, extension activities, and collaboration with multi-state universities, combined with on-site visits to Oregon nurseries and participation in industry events such as the Far West trade show, offers an exceptional educational experience not typically available in the classroom.

Project Objectives: The NWREC internship program provides students with a unique opportunity to gain hands-on experience in nursery production. The primary objectives are to:

1. Offer aspiring horticulturists practical exposure to the nursery industry, regardless of their prior experience.
2. Equip students with fundamental skills in plant propagation, cultivation, and management, under the mentorship of experienced professionals.
3. Provide a profound understanding of the challenges and opportunities within the nursery sector, going beyond theoretical knowledge.
4. Foster mentorship, build professional networks, and create a sense of community, making the internship a comprehensive and transformative learning experience for future horticultural leaders.

Methods and Timeline

Spring 2025

- **Position Description:** Create a summary of the internship role, including key responsibilities and qualifications.
- **Application Process:** Set up and manage the application procedure.
- **Promotion:** Share the internship opportunity through relevant channels.
- **Selection:** Review applications, conduct interviews, and choose the best candidates.

Summer 2025

- **Orientation:** Introduce interns to the organization and internship details.
- **Mentorship:** Assign a mentor to guide and support the interns.
- **Training:** Provide necessary training and onboarding.
- **Performance Evaluation:** Regularly assess intern performance and provide feedback.
- **Networking:** Encourage interns to engage with staff and network.
- **Project Work:** Assign meaningful projects aligned with learning goals.
- **Final Evaluation:** Review intern performance, provide recommendations, and conduct an exit process.

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The Benefit to the Nursery Industry: This internship program aims to address the industry's need for well-trained graduates with practical experience in nursery systems. By providing hands-on training and professional mentorship, the program will enhance the skills of future horticultural leaders, contribute to the growth of the nursery industry, and support its ongoing development.

Budget Total

• Student summer wages	\$9,000
• Personal protective equipment	\$8000
• Travel (gas)	\$500