

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE: Research Proposal

Title: NWREC Nursery Production Internship and Nursery Science Summit Support

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Principal Investigator:

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Collaborators:

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Background

The nursery industry faces a growing demand for graduates with practical experience in nursery systems. To address this need, the Nursery Production Internship Program at the North Willamette Research and Extension Center (NWREC) provides students with immersive training across in-ground, container, pot-in-pot, and greenhouse systems. Interns gain skills in propagation, production, and pest management while engaging in research, extension events, and nursery visits. Many past participants have entered the industry and credited the program with preparing them for horticultural careers.

In addition, the Nackley Lab organizes the Nursery Science Summit, an annual winter workshop that has successfully highlighted local research discoveries for two years. To keep the Summit fresh and nationally relevant, this proposal seeks support to bring 2–3 nursery scientists from across the country to present their work. Since most academic and USDA projects restrict travel unless it is specifically budgeted, these funds will make it possible to cover airfare, lodging, and meeting support. For Oregon growers, this means access to new voices, expertise, and national perspectives without leaving the state.

Project Objectives

1. NWREC Nursery Production Internship

- Offer students practical exposure to nursery production systems.
- Equip interns with foundational skills in plant propagation, cultivation, and pest management.
- Foster mentorship, build professional networks, and provide industry engagement.

2. Nursery Science Summit Support

- Provide travel funds to host 2–3 invited scientists from outside Oregon.
- Cover meeting costs to enhance the grower experience.
- Broaden perspectives and strengthen Oregon's position as a leader in nursery science.

Methods and Timeline

Winter 2026

- Nursery Science Summit: Host event at NWREC.
- Use travel funds to support airfare and lodging for invited speakers.
- Provide refreshments for participants to facilitate networking and discussion.

Spring 2026

- Internship: Develop position description, launch application process, and select candidates.

Summer 2026

- Internship: Provide orientation, mentorship, training, nursery visits, and project work.
- Internship: Conduct performance evaluations and final review.

The Benefit to the Nursery Industry

This dual program directly supports both workforce development and professional enrichment:

- **Internship:** Trains the next generation of nursery professionals with hands-on skills, research exposure, and industry connections.
- **Summit:** Brings new scientific perspectives into Oregon, giving growers access to research they would otherwise need to travel for and reinforcing Oregon's reputation as a hub for nursery innovation.

Budget

- Student summer wages: **\$8,240**
- Students Supplies, Tools and Personal protective equipment: **\$575**
- Travel (internship-related): **\$575**
- Travel support for invited Summit speakers: **\$4,500**
- Food and beverage for Summit: **\$500**

Total: \$14,390