

# Internship SUCCESS STORIES

from the Collegiate Plant Initiative

*Growing the industry requires supporting younger generations. Internships are a great way for students interested in horticulture to gain experience and nurture that curiosity.*

BY DANIELLE IVANOV

Tessa Hochhaus, a senior plant genetics major, and Morgan Moore, a junior horticultural science major, at University of Florida, returned to campus last fall fresh from Pleasant View Gardens in Loudon, New Hampshire.

They both landed paid summer internships with Proven Winners, a corporate partner of UF's Collegiate Plant Initiative.

"We worked in the research and development program," says Hochhaus, explaining that each intern was responsible for a personal project and final showcase with the company.

Hochhaus specialized her personal project with a verbena comparison study, while Moore worked closely with the Pleasant View stock house. Both were responsible for watering, caring for and taking cuttings of their plants, as well as lending a hand physically whenever needed.

## A NEW PATH

Hochhaus and Moore credit their internship success to the aid of UF professor and coleus specialist Dave Clark and the Collegiate Plant Initiative.

Moore, who started at UF as an engineering major, reached out to Clark for research opportunities and was able to find lab work analyzing post-harvest tomatoes.

After taking another semester of engineering classes but far preferring her horticulture electives, she says, "I finally made the switch [from engineering to horticulture], and I'm so glad I did. It's the best decision I've ever made."

From there, Moore said Clark encouraged her to apply for an internship position with Proven Winners. "As soon as I finished the interview, they [Proven Winners] said 'Can you come?'" Moore says, detailing how the company offered her an internship right away.

Hochhaus, who grew up with a family garden in Gainesville, Florida, similarly worked in Clark's greenhouse lab at UF where she developed basil homozygous lines prior to landing her internship.

To find internship applications, Hochhaus went to the Collegiate Plant Initiative website ([www.collegiateplantinitiative.org](http://www.collegiateplantinitiative.org)) where a list of potential positions is available for student access.

Both Hochhaus and Moore found their experience to be challenging, but rewarding.

"I've never lived outside of Gainesville before, so getting adjusted into a totally new city was hard," Hochhaus says, adding that the physical labor of maintaining the garden grounds and stock house was intense in the summer heat.

However, she and Moore enjoyed meeting the other summer interns at Pleasant View Gardens and delivering their final research presentations to their boss, Adam Moseley, and the Pleasant View Gardens' CEO.

"It was really great when we got to step out of research and development, our little niche," Hochhaus says.

When asked what advice she'd give to younger students, Moore says that becoming involved and gaining experience has helped her significantly with classwork at UF. "I went in at the end of my sophomore year ... now going into the majority

of my classes toward my major, I know a lot of things, and I can apply them," she explains, "those skills do carry on."

Hochhaus also says she'd encourage other students to apply for internships through the Collegiate Plant Initiative resources, making sure they'd be open to learning and getting the most out of whatever experience comes their way.

"Most people just don't know that plant science or horticulture is an option," Hochhaus says. She says her UF academic advisor experiences a large influx of students changing their major after the Collegiate Plant Initiative does its semester plant drop on campus.

As for the future, Hochhaus is planning on taking a gap year and pursuing an internship abroad in Germany. Her family is from Germany, so she's particularly interested in experiencing the industry there.

Morgan says she's still "really interested in the research" of fruit and vegetable crops, and would like to intern with Disney or the USDA during her last two years of undergraduate education at UF.

While Hochhaus and Moore were working with Proven Winners, another pair of CPI affiliates found success interning with Ball Horticultural Co.

## LESSONS LEARNED

Sam Nuzzi, a biochemistry major who graduated from UF in December 2017, and Abbie Clark, a public relations major who graduated from UF in August 2018, both interned with Ball Horticultural Co. in West Chicago, Illinois, this past summer.



Tessa Hochhaus (top left) and Morgan Moore (top right) interned together at Pleasant View Gardens for Proven Winners this past summer. Sam Nuzzi (bottom left) and Abbie Clark (bottom right) landed successful internships with Ball Horticultural this past summer semester thanks in part to their CPI connections.



Nuzzi initially began her studies at UF as a biology major, but quickly changed to biochemistry after developing an affinity for her chemistry courses. “I had always been into chemistry since a young age,” she says, “I figured out really quickly what I didn’t want to do.”

Clark was initially a food science and microbiology major her freshman year, but after taking chemistry, she found herself struggling to reach her true interests. After talking with the Dean of Students, she decided to switch to a public relations major. “I’m so glad that it did happen to fall into place,” she says of her experience.

Nuzzi and Clark found their internships through the Collegiate Plant Initiative, as they previously accompanied the CPI founder, Dave Clark, to Cultivate’18, where they met Anna Ball, president and CEO of Ball.

Nuzzi says Dave Clark later encouraged her to apply for the internship when a Ball representative visited UF. “I wasn’t sure if I was going to get it, but I did ... I take life about 10 minutes at a time and it worked out,” she says, explaining that she landed the summer position despite applying last-minute.

Abbie Clark’s application experience differed from Nuzzi’s as she was directly hired by Ball after completing a marketing portfolio catered to Ball Horticultural Co. in her public relations writing class. “There [are] always opportunities if you reach out to the hiring manager,” she says.

Nuzzi was hired as the fragrance and flavor chemistry intern, while Abbie Clark landed the social media and public relations position. They both say their overall experience was enjoyable and that their supervisors at Ball were not only great teachers but also great friends.

Clark proudly says her job was to create video and photo content for Ball. This required her to take photos in the 9-acre garden and post them on social media. Her brainchild for the summer was creating an Instagram page for the company.

Nuzzi summarizes her own gains by saying her work with analytical chemistry and lavender gave her

needed skills for future jobs. “The experience I got at Ball helped me get into a different lab here [at UF],” she says. Nuzzi currently works with Professor Harry Klee primarily developing better fruit flavor in tomatoes, and she is planning to take her GRE and apply

for graduate school this fall.

Clark says her long-term goal is to get an MBA, but that she is currently job-hunting for a PR agency position. “Don’t be afraid to go out there and really push for something that you want,” she advises other students. “As long as

you’re professional,” Nuzzi chimes in, “the worst somebody can say to you is no.” *gpn*

*Danielle Ivanov is a staff writer with the Collegiate Plant Initiative. For more information, go to [www.collegiateplantinitiative.org](http://www.collegiateplantinitiative.org).*

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