

Graduate Student Professional Interest Group

Student Spotlight:

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1. Tell us what you love about horticulture.

Horticulture is amazing because its not only a science but an art.

2. Why and when did you get into horticulture?

I started working in a greenhouse in my freshman year of college because I adored being in nature and wanted to learn more about plant science.

3. What inspired you to go into graduate school?

I never wanted to stop learning so I knew I'd go to graduate school. I chose plant biology because I loved being around plants and working with them has so much potential to make a difference in food systems and people's lives.

4. What is your goal after school?

My goal is to lead initiatives in horticulture and community development around the world.

5. What is your favorite plant?

It's so tough to pick a favorite! For trees, I love banyan trees (*Ficus benghalensis*) and American beech trees (*Fagus grandifolia*). For herbs, I work on basil (*Ocimum basilicum*) so I am biased there, but I also love lavender (*Lavandula spp.*) for its aroma. For flowers, I've been on an orchid kick and can't pick one type!

6. What would you research if you had unlimited funds?

I would research the feasibility of introducing new crops to different regions in terms of their ability to grow locally and their market potential.

7. What has been the highlight of your graduate school experience so far? On the other hand, have you had any major research mishaps?

Honestly, the highlight of my program has been gaining a deeper sense of self-confidence and humility. I've had so many amazing academic opportunities, most of which I failed at repeatedly until I finally got them right, sometimes even years later. This process was very tough on me initially, but the skills I gained and the discovery process was so rewarding.

8. Do you have any advice for incoming graduate students regarding their academic and/or personal life?

Graduate school is challenging in a different way than undergraduate school. Undergraduate can be very difficult between balancing tough classes, maintaining extracurriculars, working a job(s), etc., but a PhD program is that plus learning how to work autonomously (often without deadlines), how to make research decisions and how to bear the consequences of those decisions to ultimately become the expert in your field.





