

GROWERTALKS

Young Voices

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A Year of Learning

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The good News! The exact place where I received the email from The Ohio Program.

Some of my experiences—growing mums, scouting and controlling diseases.

I'm from a small city in the countryside of my state in Brazil where my family lives. My dad was born and raised on a cattle farm, and as soon as I could, I started my way onto agriculture—first as an agriculture technician at high school and today as an Agronomy student in college.

This story starts one year ago in college in my home country ... Talking with some teachers about professional opportunities, all of them recommended internships abroad. One of them told me about The Ohio Program (from The Ohio State University). I researched it, and after discussing with my family and friends, I decided to apply.

Here's an interesting part of this history: After applying, I was on my summer vacation waiting for the response from the program. I decided to go with some friends to

a nearby mountain to go rock climbing and everything was going normally until I saw a notification on my phone. After I checked, I didn't know if I was more surprised to have a signal in the middle of nowhere or glad to be accepted by the program!

After that was time to start preparing to stay in another country for about a year. It would be a new field in agriculture for me (greenhouses) and new crops (ornamentals). I was expecting a lot from it—in short, that I would be in a greenhouse to learn from veterans about the business. But I was wrong; this is only part of the program.

When I arrived, I was welcomed by the Battlefield Farms team and the local community. I had a great blessing to find a good church to attend while I was here. There, I found a community to worship and have fellowship. With them, I had the experience to dive into the culture, participating in the local church softball league and celebrating the American holidays with the families.

I knew just a few things about America before moving here and I was positively surprised when I arrived. I like a bunch of things here, but especially all the freedom that they have in economy, speech and religion. Hard work is part of everyday life and whoever put effort on it will bear the fruits.

Beyond the obvious (that is learning about the industry), I'm improving a bunch of other things while I'm here: the capacity to make decisions and work in a team, dealing with different persons; English in all aspects, speaking, listening and writing; and, of course, responsibility from all the tasks and duties. All of this besides evolving myself with the local culture and community in my county.

Here, we have contact with professionals that are in the business for decades, with tons of experience and willing to share with young professionals that want to learn. You will have the opportunity to practice what you are studying in school and see it working in real life. But all of this is only available for those who are willing to learn and are not afraid to get some dirt on their boots. It will not be easy, you will need to work hard daily, but the results make it worthwhile. Show interest to your supervisors and always seek to do more than your regular work and for sure they help you grow.

I also had the opportunity to go to the biggest event in the horticulture industry, called Cultivate. There, we had the opportunity to be in touch to the greatest companies and professionals and to receive directions about the opportunities on green careers. Good lectures, workshops and, of course, a fun time with the other interns.

After almost a year, I have some new stories and memories to remember. For sure I'm coming back home with new perspectives and a different mindset about agriculture. I made great friendships, learned good principles on business and all this will help me to start my career back home.

So, after all of this, I hope that others consider participating in the program and enjoy a great time diving in American culture and agribusiness. **GT**

Luís Gustavo Costa interned at The Ohio Program in 2019 and is currently back in his home country of Brazil continuing his studies.