

GROWERTALKS

Young Voices

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Our Time in America

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The Ohio State University's international intern program, known as The Ohio Program (TOP), strives to provide the best opportunities for on-the-job training for specially selected agricultural and horticultural students and practitioners. Through this program, we had the opportunity to intern at South Central Growers, located in Springfield, Tennessee.

Applying to The Ohio Program was clearly an excellent choice. The program committee takes the time to learn about each candidate's career interests in order to match them with the best opportunity for their career goals. After going through the application process, we were accepted as interns for the ornamental horticulture field and placed with South Central Growers.

Pictured: Thalia Perez Albela (left) and Caroline Do Nascimento with the chrysanthemum trials at South Central Growers in 2018.

Coming from South America, we were very interested in learning more about the large-scale greenhouses that exist in the United States, as well as the technology that they use and the characteristics of the industry. We plan to use this knowledge in our own countries to help develop and improve local practices for more efficient greenhouse production. The first thing that caught our attention at this greenhouse was the sheer size and cutting-edge technology that's used.

This internship also allowed us to get to know and understand the relevance of the ornamental horticulture industry within the U.S., as well as other countries that have distinct seasons throughout the year, such as the case in Europe. It's been amazing to see how important it is for American families to renew their gardens each season.

Our main function as interns was the care and management of the plant trial material. The varieties produced in these trials represented the newest breeding available from the foremost plant breeders in the world. New varieties were grown in a greenhouse environment and then planted into the South Central trial garden to measure garden

performance. Some selections simply contained improvements on existing genetics, while others were totally new varieties. We managed the production of these crops and evaluated them throughout the season, providing valuable information to South Central and our breeder partners.

The Ohio Program not only provides the opportunity to gain professional experience in the field, but it also encourages interns to continue to learn. Throughout the year, we had many trainings and had the unique opportunity to participate in the largest horticultural fair in the United States: Cultivate'18, in Ohio. It was an amazing experience! Being able to participate in this trade show presented a window of opportunities for us. We were able to interact with many horticultural companies and share our knowledge with growers and other interns from different parts of the world. Cultivate provides a wide variety of workshops covering topics such as job interviews, environmental issues, leadership and emotional intelligence. This is helpful not only here in the United States, but also for our future work and in general for our professional life.

During Cultivate, The Ohio Program and Syngenta hosted a voluntary project for all horticulture interns. The project consisted of testing Syngenta's Mural fungicide and measuring its effects in relation to transpiration, drought resistance and improved root growth. We are grateful and proud to have been selected as the winners of this trial's project. This recognition meant a lot to us and has been a staple of our achievements during the internship.

These experiences have shaped one of the most gratifying and fulfilling events of our lives. Having had the opportunity to work in a new country, sharing with people from different nationalities, cultures and ways of thinking while sharing the common interest of agriculture has proved to be invaluable.

We are extremely grateful to The Ohio Program and South Central Growers for providing this opportunity and allowing us to experience such an amazing year. By growing plants, we have also grown, both professionally and personally. **GT**

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