

## **Student Internship Reflections**

### **Tina- Flowerwood Nursery**

Tina completed her 2007 Vic and Margaret Ball Internship at Flowerwood Nursery in Loxley, Alabama. Tina was rotated amongst the various propagation, production and shipping areas over her 3 month internship. She commented that the internship reflected hard work, attention to detail, and stressed the importance of teaching personnel management in horticultural curricula. It was more of a “how to work with people experience” for Tina, however she learned a great deal about nursery production and management.

Tina worked in the shipping greenhouses for a period of time learning how to mix and match orders for large 18-wheeled trucks. Flowerwood has contracts with Home Depot and ship an enormous amount of material per day. She learned how to pack woody plants with tender herbaceous perennials and discovered the weight of the carts early in the shipping experience. Tina also learned how to communicate with Hispanic workers using common horticultural phrases in Spanish.

Tina also learned about irrigation, collection ponds, and the importance of good water quality. She was exposed to fertilizer tank mixing, pH and EC in-line monitoring, and pumps and controllers. Tina worked minimally in the propagation area because of the summer season, however she described the propagation houses and the manner in which Flowerwood roots cuttings. Tina did mention that the nursery was fairly protective of the surrounding creeks and streams. Flowerwood is a large operation that uses primarily overhead irrigation and most of the irrigation water is reclaimed back into the canals and collection ponds.

Tina learned how herbicides are applied in the nursery and indicated that weed management was an important practice at Flowerwood. Another important practice was plant maintenance in terms of pruning. Flowerwood has a special device that clips the shrubs and perennials to encourage branching. She also introduced me to the soil mixing process and how the nursery composts raw bark and then blends it with various media components to make several types of growing substrates.