

The Various Duties of a Masters Research Assistant

Graduate Student Projects

There are usually 4 to 5 graduate students employed in the Small Fruit and Vegetable IPM laboratory during any given semester. In my tenure as a Masters student there, I assisted the other students with their work on the control of whiteflies and aphids in cucurbits, monitoring and control of flower thrips in blueberries, and monitoring and control of sap beetles in strawberries.

Daniel Frank, a fellow Masters student, worked on controlling aphids and whiteflies in zucchini squash using different mulches (white, reflective, and the living mulches buckwheat and clover). Effects on beneficial insects were also monitored. I assisted with pan trap, yellow sticky trap, in situ count, and leaf disc sampling both in the field and in the laboratory.

During my Masters and Research Assistantship, I learned many of the skills and techniques for sampling flower thrips from Dr. Alejandro Arevalo. He was then working on his dissertation research on the Ecology, monitoring, and control of flower thrips in blueberries in Florida and Georgia.

I also aided Masters student Crystal Kelts with her work on sap beetle monitoring and control. I helped with in situ counts and trap sampling.

Finally, I helped Doctor of Plant Medicine student Lisa Myers construct cages for her laboratory experiment.

Laboratory Projects

There were many projects conducted in the lab that were not related to a particular student's research. The main ones I was involved in during my Masters research were: examining the effectiveness of insecticide treated spheres on Mediterranean fruit fly control and a laboratory project on blueberry maggot fly.

During my Masters program, a laboratory experiment to test the effectiveness of insecticide treated spheres on Mediterranean fruit fly control was conducted. I helped to record the numbers of knocked-down and dead flies.

For the blueberry maggot fly experiment I helped to construct small cages in which blueberries were suspended on a metal screen over vermiculite.

General Duties

I was also required to help with some general duties. I helped to maintain the greenhouse plants by watering and fertilizing them. General maintenance duties included keeping the greenhouses clean, weeding, cleaning used pots, disposing of dead or highly diseased plants, etc.

During this time, a small section of blueberries was planted at the Citra Plant Science Research and Education Center as part of my Major Professor's research work. A small area of grapes was put in next to this towards the end of my Masters program. Pruning and weeding were the main things I did to help out with these plantings.