

The Various Duties of a 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 first year as a PhD student, I assisted the other students with their work on the control of whiteflies and aphids in traditionally and organically grown cucurbits, monitoring and control of blueberry gall midge in blueberries, monitoring and control of grape root borer, and control of twospotted spider mites (TSSM).

Teresia Nyoike, then a Masters student, worked on controlling aphids and whiteflies in zucchini squash using different mulches (white, reflective, and the living mulch buckwheat) in combination with Admire[®]. 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.

Another Master's student, Corraine Scott, looked at the effect of incorporating various cover crops and combinations of cover crops on the control of aphids and whiteflies in subsequently planted summer squash. Effects on beneficial insects and Lepidoterans were also monitored. I assisted with sampling that included the above mentioned techniques as well as pitfall trap, beat cloth, and bucket trap sampling.

During my Research Assistantship and Ph.D. program, I aided Ph.D. student Craig Roubos with two projects. His main project involved blueberry gall midge monitoring and control. I assisted in collecting and dissecting blueberry buds. In his project on grape root borer monitoring and control, I helped with bucket trap sampling, applying the attract-and-kill Last Call[®], and applying insecticides via a soil drench.

During my Assistantship and the first year of my Ph.D program, I aided Master student Aimee Fraulo with her research on TSSM in strawberries by helping to collect leaves and count mites.

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 area of blackberries was planted. I continued to help with pruning, weeding, and harvesting in the blueberries and grapes.