Location: Mercer Botanic Gardens 22306 Aldine Westfield Road, Humble TX 77338, 713-274-4160

Website: http://themercersociety.org/ and http://www.hcp4.net/community/parks/mercer

Title of Internship: Herbarium Research: Preserving the Past for the Future

- Native Plant Society of Texas-Houston Chapter Mercer Herbarium Internship

Internship Overview:
What is a herbarium? It is a collection of pressed, dried and mounted plants and plant parts. These are stored on acid-free paper in climate and pest-controlled cabinets. Mercer Botanic Gardens herbarium, registered as MERCA in Index Herbariorum, a global directory of herbaria and staff, includes plants of east Texas, rare eastern Texas species, permanent sample sites that include Harris County saline prairies, and specimens from Mercer Botanic Gardens living collections. In the spring of 2017, the herbarium collection at Mercer grew from approximately 5,000 to about 50,000 specimens with the long-term loan of a collection from the Robert Vines Environmental Science Center and Arboretum (Spring Branch Science Center) herbarium, registered as SBSC in Index Herbariorum, an important collection documenting the flora of the Houston metro area and East Texas.

Core Responsibilities:
- Report to the Mercer Botanical Center staff botanists
- Document and catalog plant specimens; log data into computer software; review, print, and attach labels to vouchers (mounted plant specimens); organize and store various plant family vouchers
- Maintain the plant specimens and apply up to date identification and current nomenclature
- Learn how to georeference collection locations for specimens
- Communicate professionally with herbarium specialists on best practices for handling vouchers
- Review details for future image scanning and online access of collection
- Communicate professionally with Mercer Botanic Gardens staff and professional partners, The Mercer Society, volunteers, and the visiting public at Mercer Botanic Gardens
- Access the onsite botanical library, online resources, and personal experiences of others to research current information
- Participate in the Mercer Botanic Gardens Student Research Symposium

Job Dimensions/Other Requirements:
- Intern must enjoy working in an office setting as well as outdoors. Morning projects will include working in the garden, conservation nursery and rare plant preserve.
- Intern will attend Lunch Bunch presentations, summer workshops and other events.
- Intern will travel from Mercer Botanic Gardens to the Mercer Botanical Center research building (0.4 mile, one-way) on a regular basis. All other necessary travel will be facilitated through the supervisor.
- Must be available: mid-June – mid-August 2018; 40 hours per week, worked primarily Monday – Friday with flexible dates/hours for college requirements; 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. with a 30-minute lunch. Some weekends may be required.

Community Impact/Outcomes & Deliverables:
- Educational tools will be made available to the public to encourage confidence in working with plants and identifying and researching local plant populations.
- The herbarium is available as a research tool for universities, colleges, botanical institutions, the horticulture industry, citizen scientists and others.
- It is also open to students and used for training classes for citizen scientists and supports the training of high school students for the Texas Envirothon Organization, botanical education classes and Mercer’s monthly luncheon lecture series.
Student Qualities/Experiences Desired/Qualifications and Requirements:
- Familiarity with plants/botany, knowledge of Microsoft Office, highly proficient research and writing skills, and experience working with volunteers.
- May occasionally, as needed, lift up to 40 pounds and work outdoors in heat, humidity, rain, cold and dust.
- A background check and drug screening will be administered by Harris County Precinct 4 prior to hiring.

Learning Objectives/Educational Benefits:
- The intern will learn how to communicate professionally with coworkers and their professional partners as well as with volunteers and visitors while working in the garden. The intern will develop strong time management skills to keep tasks moving forward. Operating equipment such as microscopes with cameras, scanners, and copy machines will also be taught during this internship. The intern will develop the ability to work successfully within a team.
- The intern will learn about the impact of environmental health and societal health and sustainable practices.
- The intern will gain an understanding of the functions of working in a public facility and the non-profit sector with hands-on participation in day-to-day operations and special events.
- The intern will work alongside other potential interns to produce and present the Mercer Botanic Gardens Student Research Symposium, by preparing PowerPoint presentations and public speaking to a varied audience.
- The program endeavors to promote critical thinking, independence, self-confidence, perseverance, and group working skills.

How to apply:
- Please email a résumé and cover letter to Anita Tiller (atiller@hcp4.net) and Suzzanne Chapman (schapman@hcp4.net).

Final Thoughts:
- The goals of The Mercer Society and Mercer Botanic Gardens is to connect people with plants and to instill a love of nature and our role as inhabitants and stewards of our environment.
- Herbarium specimens provide sources of DNA for use in studying taxonomy and the relationship between plants. They help to document changes in the distribution of vegetation over time and, in turn, help track changes in climate.