Volunteer/Intern Opportunity: Propagation with the Woody Plant Breeding and Genetics lab

Timeframe: Mid-late June, 2016

Time commitment: ~10 hrs per week for 2-3 weeks.

Project: Vegetative propagation of North American deciduous azalea species (Rhododendron sect. Pentanthera) for purposes of abiotic stress tolerance evaluations

Description: I am seeking a volunteer/intern who is willing and interested in woody plant propagation. Specifically, you will be involved in propagating several deciduous azalea species from cuttings. This project is part of my PhD research, which screens wild, deciduous azalea germplasm for tolerance to abiotic stressors including cold, heat, drought, and various soil conditions. I will be collecting semi-hardwood cuttings from plants growing at the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University in Boston, MA, where I will be a visiting fellow this summer working to acquire germplasm for my research. I will be mailing the cuttings I collect directly to the HRC in separate shipments. You will work closely with Steve McNamara and Tacy Sickeler at the HRC to root the cuttings upon their arrival at the HRC. Fortunately, azalea cuttings are easy to root from mailed shipments and the results are often very rewarding!

Logistics: The rooting process is very straightforward and outlined below. See Steve and Tacy to review these steps prior to starting.

1. Cuttings will be mailed to the HRC no earlier than the second week of June. I’ll know the exact dates I’ll be shipping towards the end of May, as shipping will depending on when the azalea growth in Boston, MA is at an appropriate stage.
2. Upon arrival, cuttings will be organized in plastic bags containing wet paper towels and a tag.
3. For each individual bag with cuttings, remove the cuttings and dip them in rooting powder (see Steve or Tacy for a demonstration)
4. Fill up a square, deep tray with coarse pine bark
5. Stick the cuttings from a single bag in a row within the bark filled tray. Use the tag provided with the bag of cuttings to mark the row.
6. Repeat steps 3-5 for the remaining bags of cuttings in the shipment
7. Once trays are filled, place them on the designated palate in the misthouse (polyhouse)

About me: My name is Alex Susko, and I am a graduate student in plant breeding advised by Stan Hokanson at the University of Minnesota. I study North American deciduous azaleas, and am a big fan of rhododendrons and many other woody plants. My research broadly looks at how deciduous azalea populations adapt to environmental stress, and I use these inferences from wild germplasm to guide the improvement of cultivated varieties

Please contact Steven McNamara for this opportunity mcnam004@umn.edu or 612 301-1828