Sarah Da Silva Benevenute,
University of Florida, Gainesville, FL
A UF graduate student, Sarah is keeping centered on her research with a focus on practices and strategies used to address pests and diseases that threaten agricultural productivity, crop quality, and food security. After finishing graduate school, she would like to become a professor of horticultural sciences on a prestigious university. Having her research program, she is working towards improving pests and disease management that continues to be a major challenge to the agricultural industry worldwide and improve the lives of those involved in crop production. Her desire is to combine her skills and knowledge acquired during her academic years with a passion in plant science to inspire future generations to become involved as well. She hopes to make positive contributions to agriculture and raise awareness about the challenges that agriculture is facing and will deal with in the future on producing food to feed an increasing global population.

Hayden Bracken, Kansas State University
As an incoming freshman, Hayden has taken many classes related to horticulture throughout her high school career like; Agriscience, Plant and Soil Sciences, Floriculture, and Horticulture currently in her senior year. Since her sophomore year, she has been interested in horticulture and has wanted to pursue it as a career. It wasn't until her senior year that she really nailed down what exactly she wanted to do and has now decided to go into production / greenhouse management. Her goal is to move to the West Coast and work at greenhouses or gardens that are in that area. Ultimately, she would like to own her own greenhouse. Both of her grandmother's gardens played an impact on her and inspired her to spend time growing her own plants like golden pathos and wandering jew, as well as many different types of cactuses.

Melanie Cabrera, University of Florida
Growing up in an agricultural town in Cuba, Melanie was always surrounded by nature. She found herself fascinated by plants aesthetically and scientifically. She was often dissuaded from pursuing an agricultural career and told to study something "more prestigious". As she witnessed the clear impact of her parents' medical careers, she accepted that pursing an MD would be a respectable and meaningful path. While she excelled in studying anatomy and physiology on the pre-med track her first year of college, she became increasingly involved with collecting, propagating, and selling plants as a hobby. One day as she was preparing for an interview for the competitive UF Medical Honors Program, she confronted her motive for a career in medicine with honesty: she realized that the love she had for medicine was truly a dedication to science and helping others - desires that could also be fulfilled by a career in agriculture. She switched her major to Plant Science with an emphasis in Breeding and Genetics and started working in a plant molecular biology lab as well as with the coleus breeding program at UF. Melanie has enjoyed every second of work and is constantly fascinated by all the things she has learned.

Natalie Chavez, Colorado State University
Natalie started by taking classes in Environmental Horticulture (EH) at her community college, along with joining the environmental horticulture club where she met some of the most inspirational and down-to-earth people. Clearing out weeds from the potted plants, they were caring for, hardly felt like a hassle-in fact, she enjoyed spending more time with the plants and had the opportunity to observe their structure closer. Every fall, the EH club provides a plant sale sponsored by Sierra Oro Farm Trail, a community association of farmers and horticulturists.

Now, she has applied to Colorado State University to attain a Bachelor of Science. After graduation, she wants to work under a company that protects the environment while creating aesthetically pleasing spaces for clients.

Caroline Gordon, University of Florida
Over the course of Caroline's first year and a half of college she had some incredible opportunities to explore her interests and passions through coursework, clubs, and employment. She has enjoyed several classes centered around botany, horticulture, and landscape management within her major of Landscape Architecture. This has led her to add a minor in Environmental Horticulture to her degree! A large factor in this choice was her experience as a student and then teaching assistant for the class Environmental Plant Identification and Use. She found through both taking and teaching in this class that she has a deeper interest in horticultural studies than her major covers, so she made the decision to add a minor as a course of study to her degree. She has greatly enjoyed her experience in the Environmental Horticulture Club at UF and has learned so much from the horticultural opportunities that the club offers its members.

Luis Jonathan Clavijo Herrerra, University of Florida
Luis Jonathan Clavijo Herrera is a graduate research assistant pursuing his Ph.D. degree in the Horticultural Sciences Department of the University of Florida. He would like to share with you a little bit of his journey, and how he discovered that horticulture not only provides food to the world, but also open many doors. He is originally from Bolivia. In 2012, after trying two times, Luis got the opportunity to study at Zamorano University, in Honduras, a Latin American institution focused on agricultural sciences. Originally planning to join the Agroindustry program, he discovered his passion for horticulture and plant sciences during his undergraduate studies, and even more important, he realized this was an opportunity to contribute to the improvement of the life quality of farmers and people. He obtained his bachelor's degree in 2015. That same year, his connection with horticultural sciences opened the first of many doors for him, and I got the opportunity to complete an internship at the University of Florida, where he learned about the importance of scientific research for boosting horticultural production.

Yuvraj Khamare, University of Florida, Gainesville FL
As Ph.D. candidate at the University of Florida, Yuvraj Khmare's goal is to find effective, economical, and environmentally friendly weed management options for growers and landscape professionals. His PhD thesis is focused on altering production practices for weed management in container nurseries. He am currently working on evaluating the effect of stratified substrates and strategic fertilizer placement on the growth of common nursery weeds and ornamental crops. After graduation, Yuvraj's plan is to work as a successful weed scientist with an agrochemical company or academia, helping to find and develop new methods of weed management. He intends to implement this passion for educating and communicating with the public in his professional career. He hopes to elucidate the often-murky topic of weed management, helping the public to become more competent in the uses and management of weeds in their gardens and landscapes.

Kollier Miller, Texas Tech
While Kollier Miller started out with little knowledge of the horticultural industry, he quickly learned to appreciate the industry. His goal as he began applying for colleges was to choose engineering as his major. However, he found out about the Landscape Architecture program at Texas Tech University. As he learned more about the Landscape Architecture program, he found it more interesting. Landscape Architecture gave him the opportunity to learn skills in many of the engineering fields. A landscape architecture degree would allow him to do everything an engineer would do, except build bridges. He loves math and critical thinking and likes to work through problems that others find difficult, and he thought this major would allow him to pursue these interests. After graduation, he would like to work for a landscape architecture firm and one day start his own firm.

Dipiza Oli, Montana State University
While applying for the scholarship, Oli was working in The Standard Nursery and fully appointed as a Gardening and Landscaping Supervisor/ Project Manager in the US Mission (American Embassy) with more than 30 gardeners under my supervision. They have a large tunnel where they produce their plants through different propagation techniques in all seasons. Most of her work consists of symptomatic and asymptomatic disease diagnosis and providing the best solution for sustainability of soil and plants on daily basis to the US Government owned and leased property in Kathmandu. She performs Tree Risk assessment, removal of trees that are more than 50 years old with their arborist team and Pruning in the US Mission, Nepal. She is currently working on her Master's degree in Horticulture, Plant Science and Plant Pathology at Montana State University.

Vania Maria Pereira, University of Florida
After graduation Vania plans to follow the research path in academia, botanical garden, or industry level. She is passionate about the research of natives and new species. Driven by the
excitement of unfolded knowledge and the challenges of different species. She has been studying and working in the Horticulture field since 2015 and still feels as it is the first day every day. Keeping a learning mindset as we still have so much to explore and understand regarding plant species, practices, and techniques. I qualify for this grant due to my passion for this field and its challenges. With the help of the National Horticulture Foundation, she would be able to focus more on her research and install experiments that will directly beneficiate Florida native growers and Florida ecosystems. Understanding more about palm production and the potential of the

pharmaceutical plant production field. Together we will create a better and more aware world on the importance of native plants in our lives.

Nadia Phillips, University of Minnesota
Through her position at the USDA-ARS Cereal Disease Lab, she is currently exploring her Plant Science major in a real-world setting. Situated on the St. Paul campus at the University of Minnesota, they work with the largest cereal crops and the diseases that affect them. This includes wheat, barley, oats, and their disease's host plants. Nadia works within the Rouse lab, where we specialize with the wheat fungal disease wheat stem rust. She plans to continue working for the USDA lab throughout her time at the University and aim to intern with the USDA plant breeders her sophomore year. She is pursuing a Plant Breeding track for her Plant Science Bachelor of Science degree. She originally was planning on pursuing Floriculture, or Landscape Design, as she had a great passion for the arts and creating beautiful displays with plants for all to cherish. However, her time at the Cereal Disease Lab has opened her eyes to the bigger picture of Plant Sciences. to create sturdy, disease resistance plants that anyone can care for, horticulturally and agriculturally.

Meredith Preve, Nigara Community College
Meredith Rose Preve considers herself a bonafide, crazy plant lady, and diehard environmentalist of her social circle. I attended public school until the age of 13, before leaving to pursue homeschool, where she was afforded the opportunity to explore the academic topics that were of especial interest to me. In her late teens, she assisted closely with her family's small stationery business. as lead designer and in marketing and sales capacities as well. Throughout this time, she acquired a lot of foundational knowledge about the business sphere, and she also began feeling a strong draw towards all things botanical, most clearly evidenced in her growing houseplant collection, which by then was numbering over 250 specimens. Concurrently, she is becoming deeply invested in the declining biological state of the world, leading to my first crack at a massive, native-only pollinator habitat garden in her backyard.

Katelyn Wissinger, Virginia West Community College
After graduation, Katelyn is interested in pursuing a career in production and sale of plants. She will be able to utilize the skills and knowledge she has gained in her post- secondary education to strengthen the future of the local horticulture community-working with local farms, greenhouses, or garden centers. Being part of the production side of horticulture means that she will always be hands on with the plants being sold. She hopes to gain an in-depth knowledge of what happens behind the scenes that puts vegetable starts and cell packs of pansies in people's yards. She can actively play a role in improving people's lives and shares a passion for plants from the very beginning - when the seed is planted. Working at a local greenhouse or garden center will allow her to be closely connected to the community and enable her to expand people's perception of what it means to garden.

Not pictured:

Rachel Chazotte, University of Florida;
Erin Hajostek, Palm Beach State College;
Annabella Lyndon, University of Florida;
Colton Michellini, Ball State University

For more information about the National Horticulture Foundation's Scholarships, visit https://www.nationalhorticulturefoundation.org/scholarships or Email: lreindl@fngla.org