

Internship gives senior taste of vineyard management

Cornell University

As an extension intern at the Long Island Horticultural Research and Extension Center (LIHREC) in Riverhead, N.Y., DeAnna D'Attilio '12 spent the summer covering a lot of ground, from data collection to travel across Long Island's wine grape community.

One of 10 College of Agriculture and Life Sciences students in Cornell Cooperative Extension's summer internship program, D'Attilio took charge of a project to learn more about how undervine groundcovers can reduce herbicide use and vine vigor in vinifera wine grapes; she worked under the direction of Alice Wise, senior resource educator with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County and director of the Long Island Viticulture Extension Program, housed at LIHREC.

"My internship at LIHREC has been an amazing opportunity," said D'Attilio. "I have learned about managing vineyards during the growing season, while improving my skills in research, observation and communicating with growers."

D'Attilio has put her extension skills to work as a contributor to the Long Island Fruit and Vegetable Update produced by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County.

"Growers really enjoyed reading a different viewpoint and D'Attilio's intellectual discussion of leaf removal and véraison [the onset of ripening]," said Wise. "She has done very well with the physical side of vineyard management and sees the connections between the job and her education. I foresee great things in her future."

While D'Attilio's main focus was comparing vine growth with bare soil under the trellis to such cover crops as clover and grasses, her daily duties also included maintaining a variety trial of 36 wine grape varieties and an experiment on pest management that pits a "standard" spray schedule against organic and other systems that have a lower impact on the environment.

A Connecticut native, she initially studied plant science with a focus on plant pathology. Her interest in grapes and wine came after she took Cornell's introductory Wines and Vines course in the spring.

"It was one of the best decisions I ever made," she said. "I declared a double major shortly after."

D'Attilio says she is equally interested in working in the vineyards of Argentina and applying to graduate school for viticulture research.

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"Viticulture is applied plant science with so many different elements," she said. "Over the past three years, I have discovered an interest in plant pathology and plant physiology. Being a viticulture student opens doors to both fields."

In her first two years, she worked on potato blight for Cornell's Department of Plant Pathology and Plant-Microbe Interactions. During summers, she worked at a wholesale plant nursery and did research rotations in soil, tissue culture and pathology labs, and conducted tests of growth regulators on landscape plants.

More details about D'Attilio's summer is reported in her blog <http://blogs.cornell.edu/vien-interns/category/deanna-dattilio/> [1].

Kari Richards is the undergraduate coordinator for the Cornell viticulture and enology undergraduate program.

[SOURCE](#) [2]

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[1] <http://blogs.cornell.edu/vien-interns/category/deanna-dattilio/>

[2] <http://www.news.cornell.edu/stories/Aug11/WineIntern.html>