New York Botanical Gardens Internship Report

The New York Botanical Garden owns 240 acres, including 50 acres of forest cover, in Bronx, New York. Every day spent working at the New York Botanical Garden as a Forestry Intern has provided me with a learning experience to take home. I have had the opportunity to participate in classes and field trips offered by their School of Professional Horticulture which has introduced me to new fields, new approaches to ecological management, and has broadened my network in the Northeast. This opportunity has given me a chance to use my classroom knowledge and I know that the things that I have learned in the Thain Family Forest will help me in future classes at Sewanee. My dendrology, ecology, and forest management knowledge has grown by participating in research projects, trail maintenance, and the removal of invasive species of the forest. The ways in which my knowledge and abilities have been enhanced by spending this summer interning at the New York Botanical Garden are immeasurable.

On a daily basis, I came into the New York Botanical Garden to work on trail and forest maintenance in the Thain Family Forest. I learned how to identify invasive species in the field, like English ivy, honeysuckle, and knotweed, and the proper way to remove each of them. Maintaining a native forest is critical to the survival of local wildlife communities. The native plant community of New York City is different from the native plant community in Sewanee, and it was a valuable experience to learn and understand what belongs and what does not in the Northeastern forests. The management tools used at the Botanical Garden are also different from the management tools used on Sewanee’s domain. I enjoyed learning new ways to manage the forest in an urban environment. A valuable learning experience in the forest involved learning
and utilizing the science behind trail maintenance. I have always held an interest in making the
forest a resource for human enjoyment and I now understand the work that is required to make
that a reality as well as the techniques utilized to create a safe, and enjoyable walking trail
through the woodlands.

   I utilized the opportunity to join the New York Botanical Garden’s School of
Professional Horticulture on field trips to various gardens and estates throughout the Northeast.
These trips introduced me to new fields, opportunities, management techniques, and contacts in
the horticulture and natural resources fields. I have learned how small the natural resources field
is and these contacts will be valuable for mentorship and future job searches.

   This internship gave me the opportunity to carry out my own research project. The
turbidity, pH, Nitrite and Nitrate levels, dissolved oxygen content, salinity, and the water
temperature of the Bronx River were tested and recorded with the Bronx River Alliance on a
weekly basis. The Bronx River is the only freshwater river in New York City. This is an
important resource and habitat for plenty of wildlife and even provides for recreational activities,
like canoeing and swimming. The testing and recording of the water at various sites along the
river is important to determine ‘normal’ levels and to keep the water as clean as possible to host
plant and animal communities. This experience was enriching for me because I have never been
introduced to hydrology or environmental chemistry. I observed the relationship between the air
and water temperatures that controlled the amount of dissolved oxygen present in the water. I am
confident that this knowledge and experience will help me with future classes at Sewanee.
I am grateful for my experience at NYBG because it has helped me find my desired career path. I loved the way that I was able to apply my Sewanee classwork in the field at the botanical garden. I know that experiences like this increases my ability to get a job and know what I am interested in doing for a career. I have taken advantage of every field trip and class opportunity given which have taught me so much more than I expected to learn as a Forestry Intern at the Garden. This internship enhanced my networking and organizational skills. I have gained perseverance and a greater work ethic while interning at the Garden. I am grateful to have learned to have confidence in my work and to have the willingness to step outside my comfort zone, as it is something that I was forced to do every day in New York City.

These eight weeks at the New York Botanical Gardens have been nothing short of an incredible opportunity for me to learn, grow, and connect. These eight weeks were only possible thanks to Sewanee’s internship funding program and my sponsors. I am incredibly grateful for this opportunity. I am ecstatic to return to Sewanee in the fall with more knowledge and experience than I left campus with back in May. The internship with the New York Botanical Garden will continue to benefit me and my career path for years to come.