My love of the outdoors, plants, and animals is what drew me to the Beal Botanical Garden. Completing my internship requirement working in such a beautiful and special place has been a truly enjoyable part of my academic life.

As a Beal Scholar, I worked on several different projects. In 2023, the American Public Gardens Association released a list of potentially problematic common names used in public gardens. Many plants have multiple common names, some are outdated and may be considered derogatory, insensitive, or geographically incorrect. I researched the origin and meaning of different common names used in our collection to find the best fit for our garden.

Being a Beal Scholar gave me experience teaching and presenting public programs. I created and presented a workshop about chickweed, which is a prolific edible weed we have in the garden. I taught people how to identify it, about its history and folklore, and about its many uses including harvesting and preparing a salad for participants to try. I was also able to share education programs at Darwin Discovery Day and Music and the Garden.

Over the winter, I had the opportunity to help manage our greenhouse plants. In late fall, we move all garden plants that cannot handle cold temperatures indoors. In the spring, we transplant them back into the garden after temperatures rise and there is no longer risk of frost. This is how we are able to grow tropical plants like pineapple and banana in Michigan. I have enjoyed doing propagations, learning about the specific care of different plant species, and watching them grow and change throughout the different seasons.

One of my favorite garden projects was working with our team to install the new pollinator garden. We planted pollinator friendly plants, created a pathway for visitors to explore, and planted self heal and clover to create a pollinator friendly lawn. I have picked up a multitude of new skills during my time at the garden, from plant maintenance and growing plants from seed, to research and professional development. I hope to use the knowledge and experience I’ve gained at Beal in my future endeavors.