Summer Internship in Sociohorticulture

Positions open for Summer 2026: 2-3
Estimated hours per week: 15-20

The Betty and Jacob Friedman Holistic Garden and Sustainable Food Program at Rice University was established in 2018 to introduce the Rice community to the beneficial social, environmental, and public health impacts of gardening. As a model of sustainable urban agriculture, the Garden is a living lab that provides a site for interdisciplinary research, experiential education, and community-building for a variety of academic, extracurricular, and volunteer programs. The Garden is particularly interested in investigating such topics as:

- Effects of gardens and gardening on the urban environment
- Impact of gardens and gardening on the natural ecosystem of which they are a part
- Physical and mental health benefits of gardens and gardening on gardeners
- Health benefits of organic produce

The Holistic Garden's Summer Internship program provides selected Rice students an opportunity to conduct hands-on research into one of these or related topics through a 10-week internship in **sociohorticulture,** a concept that refers to the psychosocial benefits of gardening for individuals and communities.

Over the ten-week period, interns will:

- Learn basic gardening processes and sustainable agriculture techniques
- Learn about the social, environmental, and health benefits of gardening
- Learn about the role of community gardens in the food system
- Gain first-hand experience in running a small business
- Hone research, leadership, and public speaking skills
- Propose and execute a project through independent research, hands-on experience, and mentorship from Garden staff
- Visit local farms, community gardens, and related organizations (Houston Arboretum and Nature Center, Urban Harvest, Plant It Forward, HOPE Center, Atkinsons farm, etc.)
- Meet with community leaders and professionals working in food, agriculture, and related industries.

For Summer 2026, this period runs from **May 17 - July 25**. Interns may earn up to $2000, which will be disbursed on a bi-weekly basis. Applications will be accepted **March 23rd** through **April 15th, 2026.**

Responsibilities

Interns are responsible for:

- Daily maintenance of the Garden, including planting, fertilization and irrigation, weeding, composting, pest control, soil management, and harvesting and selling our produce to the serveries
- Representing the Garden to volunteers, groups, and community organizations that visit the Garden and with whom the Garden may be collaborating
- Leading one of the Garden's special projects (i.e., crop production, produce sales and marketing, plant sales, community outreach and education, medicinal garden, workshop coordination, etc.)
- Developing and completing an independent research project on a topic related to one of the Garden's special projects (i.e., crop production, marketing, community outreach/education, bees, animal agriculture, composting, visual media and communications, enabling gardens, etc.)
- Attending weekly meetings with Garden Staff

Most of the 15-20 hours per week will be spent working on projects in the Garden, but some work—such as research and planning—may be done from home.

Qualifications

To apply, students must:

- Be enrolled for the 2026 Fall Academic Semester and in good standing as a full-time Rice undergraduate or graduate student
- Possess a strong academic interest in food, agriculture, the environment, or a related topic (sustainability, ecology, health or medicine, urban planning, etc.)
- Be able to work outside in physically demanding conditions
- Have a demonstrated commitment to community-building and sustainability
- **Be in Houston for at least 90% of the 10-week period**

We are especially seeking students with academic or professional interests in ecology, sustainability or environmental studies, nutrition and public health, urban planning, cooking and food education, science education, food policy and economics, food writing or photography, food business and entrepreneurship, or food and environmental justice.

Application Process

Applications will be accepted beginning **March 23rd** thru **April 15th, 2026**.

To apply, please email a cover letter indicating your interest in the program and how it relates to your academic or career pursuits, a résumé or CV, and 3 references to Todd Walker, Garden Manager, at tw72@rice.edu. Interviews will be held April 1st through April 22nd and decisions will be made no later than May 1st.