

Dear Morton Arboretum,

My name is Austin Fife and I believe that my background in plant-pathogen-arthropod interactions, spatial analysis, statistics and knowledge of biological control make me a suitable candidate for the position of Post-Doctoral Researcher in Tree Conservation.

I have extensive experience with designing and conducting applied research for plant protection, as both of my graduate degrees have focused on managing different plant systems from arthropods and the pathogens they vector. The challenges of my research have been multidisciplinary in nature, and accordingly I have collaborated as frequently as possible. I have benefited from the combined expertise of working with over 15 principal investigators from regional universities, state and governmental agencies. In addition to allowing me better opportunities for field and lab work, these collaborations have exposed me to the differing viewpoints of various institutions.

Furthermore, working at Research and Education Centers enhanced my communication skills as we shared our research with the public: I have spoken at 4-H and local rosarian clubs, presented to stakeholders, published technical reports, organized and led educational activities, set up booths and participated in various STEM events to disseminate our research our local communities.

The position describes the need for research experience in Mesoamerica, and I would like to emphasize that I speak, read, and write Spanish fluently, due to living independently in Mexico for 2 years as a missionary. During that time, I learned the importance of flexibility as I lived and went door-to-door serving the local communities of central Mexico.

I also tutored Spanish during my Bachelor's degree.

I also teach and mentored other colleagues: I had to rely heavily on the support of our lab technicians and remote staff, as I frequently had to commute between field sites for a field experiment with collaborators in Georgia. As a visiting student researcher, I would be gone for days working on independent projects while other employees followed my protocols and SOPs.

I have not neglected the responsibilities of a graduate student either: I have written proposals and received a few small grants as described in my CV, and I have spoken at annual meetings by various scientific organizations, in person and online, including oral and poster sessions. I am first author on two publications in peer-reviewed journals. I am finalizing a manuscript in review with ten collaborators, which has been accepted with minor revisions. I expect to finish 2-3 more publications in the near future.

I believe I also fit another requirement with my experience processing biological data and statistical programming in R, which I also use to create technical reports and data visualizations. I am familiar with spatial ecology methods as well as some machine learning and network analysis methods which I have been developing. I would love to apply these skills to larger scale projects such as your own.

In conclusion, I am confident that my expertise in plant-pathogen-arthropod interactions and broad biological experience make me a well-suited candidate for this position

Thank you for your time and consideration,

– Austin Nathaniel Fife