

Thank you note from Niagara College Scholarship Recipient Maria Barlow 2025

Dear Lee Vanspronsen,

I am writing to express my deepest gratitude for the incredible scholarship and bursary award Ontario Rock Garden & Hardy Plant Society Scholarship I recently received. Your generosity has made a significant impact on my ability to pursue my educational goals, and I am truly grateful for the support you have provided.

Thanks to your kindness, I am able to focus more on my studies and worry less about the financial burden of tuition and related expenses. Your belief in the power of education and investment in students like me is genuinely inspiring.

Once again, thank you for your generosity and belief in the potential of students. Your impact reaches beyond the financial assistance – it is a source of inspiration that fuels my determination to succeed.

Sincerely,

*Maria Barlow
Horticulture Techn (Co-op)*

Ontario Rock Garden & Hardy Plant Society Scholarship Application

To the Selection Committee,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am currently entering my second year in the Horticultural Technician program at Niagara College, where I have been pursuing my deep-rooted passion for plants and sustainable gardening. My interest in horticulture began during the COVID-19 pandemic, when caring for plants became not only a personal comfort but a gateway into a lifelong commitment to the environment and gardening.

Since then, I have immersed myself in learning about native plantings, pollinator-friendly landscapes, permaculture, and edible garden design. I am particularly inspired by the intersection of ecological stewardship and creative garden design. I love learning how we can create beautiful, resilient spaces that nourish both people and biodiversity, and spend a lot of time listening to podcasts and reading books about these topics to further my knowledge.

This summer, I am completing a co-op placement as a Horticultural Assistant at Twenty Valley Harvest, a pick-your-own cherry orchard in Jordan, Ontario. There, I've had the opportunity to apply my skills hands-on while continuing to expand my knowledge and understanding of many different horticultural practices. Outside of school and work, I'm also currently in the process of redesigning my home garden to better reflect my values, like incorporating hardy perennials, native species, and edible plants in a space that supports both pollinators and people.

Looking ahead, I hope to work either as an urban arboriculturalist or a landscape designer specializing in ecologically responsible, climate-resilient landscapes. I want to help shape the future of our urban green spaces—ensuring they are not only beautiful but functional and beneficial for the environment.

This scholarship would be deeply meaningful to me. Not only would it help relieve the financial pressure I am currently facing as a student, but it would also support my continued learning and growth within a field I care deeply about. I would be honored to receive this award and connect with fellow plant enthusiasts through the Ontario Rock Garden & Hardy Plant Society.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely, Maria Barlow