

The Allamanda Garden Club of North Port, Inc. is proud to announce the recipients of its 2026 Horticulture Scholarships. Thanks to the success of the Annual Garden Party Scholarship Fundraiser, the club will award four \$2,500 scholarships this year.



The award recipients represent a diverse spectrum of horticultural disciplines with the goal of protecting the environment.

**Stanley Carter Oleckna** of North Port, Florida, is a PhD student at the University of Florida in Gainesville. He is enrolled in the School of Forest, Fisheries, and Geomatic Sciences, with a major in Aquatic Science and Ecological Restoration. One of the areas Carter is researching is how marine ecosystems along Florida's Gulf Coast, such as seagrass beds, respond to long-term warming and altered nutrient loads. He has been awarded the \$2,500 Dianne Patterson Scholarship. This award is named after longtime member and patron Dianne Patterson to honor her generosity and dedication to education.

**Dorcas Twumwaa Gyan**, of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, is a PhD student in the Department of Urban Forestry, Environment, and Natural Resources at Southern University and A & M College, majoring in Urban Forestry. Her research integrates Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and remote sensing to assess tree equity, identify areas for agroforestry interventions, and develop strategies for sustainable land management. Dorcas has been awarded the Allamanda Garden Club Environmental Scholarship of \$2,500. This award recognizes the applicant's commitment to environmental responsibility.

**Tori Guarino** of Gainesville, Florida, is a PhD student at the University of Florida in Gainesville. She is enrolled in the Department of Interdisciplinary Ecology and majors in Horticultural Sciences. Tori's research focuses on coastal restoration using native coastal grass species to address the urgent need for sustainable, eco-friendly solutions to coastal erosion and habitat loss. She has been awarded the Alvin and Vicki Bailey Scholarship for \$2,500. The award honors Alvin and Vicki's support for horticultural education and their contributions to the local community.

**Fisher Houston** of Deerfield, Illinois, is a junior at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. He is enrolled in the School of Integrative Biology. Fisher is a research lead in the UIUC Marks Lab, where he studies plant resilience and oversees a study of the survival strategies of resurrection plants: desiccation-tolerant species that survive droughts by drying into a quiescent state. Fisher has been awarded the Allamanda Garden Club Environmental Scholarship in the amount of \$2,500. This award recognizes the applicant's commitment to environmental responsibility.

Applicants are evaluated based on their aptitude in a horticulture-related field, academic records, avocational interests, vocational potential, and character. Scholarships are awarded to college juniors or seniors in an undergraduate program, graduate students, or doctoral students.

The Allamanda Garden Club of North Port is a 501(c)3 organization. Proceeds to support scholarships are raised at an Annual Garden Party Scholarship Fundraiser and from donations to the organization's scholarship fund. For more information about the Allamanda Garden Club, go to the club's website:

<https://www.allamandagardenclub.com>