

Graduate Student Research Fellowships Summer 2026 call - Applications due November 1, 2025

The Center for Tree Science at The Morton Arboretum invites proposals for Graduate Student Research Fellowships for the summer of 2026. Applicants may request up to \$5,000 for research support and \$10,000 for summer salary. We plan to award at least two fellowships. On-site housing may be available.

The goals of the fellowship are to enhance research activities at The Morton Arboretum and to build scientific collaborations with its staff. Potential fellows are encouraged to contact appropriate Center for Tree Science collaborators well in advance of the application deadline. While applicants do not need to propose work directly connected with a given scientist's research program, projects should be broadly aligned with and further the Arboretum's mission and research priorities.

The Center for Tree Science is a research nexus at the Arboretum that directly confronts threats to trees and their ecosystems through research, collaboration, and training. Scientists in the Center for Tree Science conduct essential research to ensure healthy and resilient trees and forests in a rapidly changing world. Our work is guided by two aspirations: 1) To provide practitioners with the tools and insights needed to manage trees and ecosystems; and 2) To fill scientific knowledge gaps that we are uniquely positioned to fill given our collections, expertise, resources, partners, and setting. We advance our vision by focusing on three research themes: Arboriculture and Urban Forestry, Ecosystem Restoration and Management, and Tree Biodiversity and Conservation Science. All proposals should address at least one of these research themes. Further details on these research foci can be found in our [Research Vision](#).

The Morton Arboretum is a world-renowned nonprofit outdoor museum dedicated to the study and growth of trees. With 1,700 acres of living collections, >200,000 accessioned plants of 4,000 species, and 900 acres of natural areas including prairie and oak-hickory forest; an herbarium of >205,000 specimens; numerous long term experimental plantings; a multidisciplinary team of seven lab groups; and excellent research facilities, the Center for Tree Science offers a unique opportunity for highly collaborative and impactful research.

CTS Research Scientists

[Andrew Hipp](#) <ahipp@mortonarb.org> Systematics, Evolutionary Biology

[Sean Hoban](#) <shoban@mortonarb.org> Conservation Biology

[Luke McCormack](#) <lmccormack@mortonarb.org> Root Biology

[Meghan Midgley](#) <mmidgley@mortonarb.org> Soil Ecology

[Jake Miesbauer](#) <jmiesbauer@mortonarb.org> Arboriculture Research

[Christy Rollinson](#) <crollinson@mortonarb.org> Forest Ecology

[Razieh Yazdani](#) <ryazdani@mortonarb.org> Plant Pathology

Conditions

- Applicants must be graduate students enrolled in a PhD or Masters program and must have completed at least one full-time semester or its equivalent.
- Allowable expenses include supplies, external sample analyses, equipment, travel, and salary/fringe for the fellow. Salaries or stipends for non-fellows are not allowed. Non-disposable supplies and equipment purchased with fellowship funds are the property of the Arboretum, must be labelled as such, and will remain at the Arboretum following completion of the fellowship. No indirect costs are allowed.
- Applicants must be available to perform eight weeks of full-time research during the project (May-September 2026) and spend at least 25% of their project time at the Arboretum.
- Contracts for salary/fringe associated with the Fellowship will be made either with the Fellow's home institution or with the Fellow directly, depending on which mechanism best supports the Fellow. If the contract is with the institution, the Fellow's primary mentor must manage communications with the office at their institution that is responsible for approving external research contracts to ensure timely execution of the contract. Other research support will be paid for or purchased by the Arboretum directly.
- The Fellow must be covered by college/institutional insurance and workers compensation and will not receive any staff benefits from the Arboretum.
- The budget must be spent during the 2026 calendar year. Extensions are not allowed.
- Data generated from the fellowship will be made available to the Arboretum. All data is expected to be made open and publicly available at publication, if not sooner.

Application Timeline

Application Opens: September 1, 2025

Deadline: November 1, 2025

Award Notification: December 15, 2025

Final Report Due: December 15, 2026

This call for proposals will open again in the fall of 2026 for 2027 Center for Tree Science Fellowships.

Criteria for selection

- The proposal's scientific merit and quality. Evaluation of research quality will be based on the significance and relevance to Arboretum's mission and research priorities, novelty of research questions or hypotheses, robustness of the sampling design and analysis plan, preliminary data or relevant evidence supporting the feasibility of the proposed research, and expected outcomes or products.
- The extent to which the Center for Tree Science, through its research staff members and resources, could contribute to the research and professional goals of the fellow.
- The applicant's ability to carry out the proposed research and study.
- The likelihood that the research could be completed in the requested time.

Additional considerations

Additional considerations may be applied to differentiate similarly ranked proposals. These include, but are not limited to:

- *Other funding.* Preference will be given to projects lacking other support. Priority will be given to research projects without other external funding sources, but all interested students are encouraged to apply.
- *Relationship to dissertation research.* Preference will be given to proposals for research that is directly related to and advances the student's Master's or PhD research.
- *New collaborations.* Preference will be given to proposals that establish new collaborations with Arboretum research staff.

Application

Applicants must compile all the materials listed below as a single PDF document. The file name should follow this format: *[Last Name]_GraduateResearchFellowship_2026.pdf* Submit the proposal to CTS_admin@mortonarb.org. The single pdf should include the following:

- Completed proposal [template](#). The proposal document should be five pages or less in length.
- Current C.V. (2-page maximum)
- A cover letter (1-page maximum) that includes:
 - an explanation of how this fellowship would advance your career and research
 - significance of the research to [The Center for Tree Science](#)
- A letter of support (1-page maximum) from the applicant's research advisor. The letter should address support for the project, the relevance and importance of the project, and the applicant's ability to conduct the research and meet established deadlines.

Post-Award Obligations:

- Awardees will be required to present their findings at the end-of-summer REU symposium (tentatively July 30th) or a similar Arboretum event.
- Each awardee must submit a Final Report (due on December 15, 2026) that summarizes their research accomplishments (submission details TBA). Reports should describe research accomplishments based on the award, including scientific findings, publications, videos, and links to public workshops, lectures, or presentations.
- Awardees must acknowledge funding and affiliation with the Center for Tree Science in any resulting presentations and publications.