

REU PROGRAM FOCUS ON DR. JUAN CARLOS MELGAR

Dr. Juan Carlos Melgar, Plant and Environmental Sciences at Clemson University was one of our recent REU recipients for his project, "Understanding Light Responses of Blackberry Cultivars Grown in South Carolina for Reducing White Drupelet Disorder."

Of the progress on his REU project, Melgar says, "My student is doing a great job and we are getting very good results and learning a lot about a blackberry disorder that causes white drupelets (Photo 1, middle). We're now finishing the field part of the study, which means taking measurements of our plants in the heat of the day almost everyday. A couple of days ago I took a picture of my undergraduate student, **Katlynn Murphy**, "in action" together with graduate student, **Brian Lawrence**, who was helping her at that moment (Photo 2, bottom). The piece of equipment in the picture is measuring photosynthesis and the response of the plants to different light intensities; the natural habitat of blackberries is the edge of the forest, so growing them in full sun as they're mostly grown for commercial production seems to be one of the issues related with this disorder. Some varieties show up to 50% of the blackberries with damage."

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July 20, 2017



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