



## STUDENT SUCCESS

### Caroline Plecki – Class of 2019 Bachelor of Science, Plant Sciences



Caroline Plecki, a recent graduate of the University of Arizona (UA) Plant Science department, received the honor of best undergraduate poster presentation at the 2019 American Society for Horticultural Science (ASHS) conference. Caroline's poster, "Evaluating the Rhizosphere Microbiome Associated with Allelopathy of an Iconic Desert Shrub," is the second blue ribbon of her undergraduate career, as she also won a prize for best poster at a local biochemistry conference. This research was performed under the mentorship of Dr. A. Elizabeth (Betsy) Arnold who is an expert in the field of mycology. Her lab seeks to understand the mysterious world of plant microbiomes, specifically endophytes, asymptomatic fungi or bacteria living inside plants. Caroline presented her research on the potential benefits of endophytes, specifically those present in roots of *Larrea tridentata* (creosote bush). Her goal was to observe how these microbes might contribute to allelopathy, a survival strategy used by creosote to have an advantage in the harsh desert environment.

Caroline was inspired by her mentor, friend and past ASHS blue ribbon winner, Daryan Godfrey, to present her research at the ASHS conference, along with the encouragement and excellent preparation from every Plant Science professor and faculty member she had the pleasure of meeting. After back to back wins from UA undergraduates, *Caroline concluded that it must be due to the outstanding staff in the plant Science department that have prepared their students and set them up for success.* She also credits her win to that fact that it is just so fun to share mycological research, a field so unique and relevant to the changes she hopes to see in the world. To learn more about the benefits of ASHS, such as free membership for students, reduced registration costs, travel grants to attend conferences, access to horticulture research publications, training, and opportunities for professional networking and development, go to <https://www.ashs.org>



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