

Brianna Santamaria

I am a first-generation Master's student from Florida studying biology at Ghent University under the mentorship of Dr. Danny Haelewaters in the Research Group Mycology. During my undergraduate education at the University of Central Florida I worked in the lab of Dr. Charissa de Bekker to assist with research on *Ophiocordyceps unilateralis*, an ant-associated parasitic fungus. My experiences in Dr. de Bekker's lab fostered my interest in insect-associated fungal parasites and inspired me to want to pursue a career as a curator of a fungal collection after my schooling. Currently for my Master's thesis I am investigating how abiotic and biotic factors may affect the fungal parasite *Hesperomyces virescens (Laboulbeniales)* on the invasive alien *Harmonia axyridis (Coccinellidae)*. We hope to use these data to inform us about the potential use of this fungus as a biocontrol agent against this pest species. With the MSA Robert W. Lichtwardt Student Research Award, I will visit the lab of Oldřich Nedvěd at the University of South Bohemia (Czech Republic) this summer to perform bioassays for my thesis.