



MS Graduate Research Assistantship in Entomology: Integrated Pest Management in Fruit & Vegetable Crops

Dr. Julie Peterson (currently, [Agroecosystems Entomology Lab](#), University of Nebraska-Lincoln) is establishing a new extension and research program focused on specialty crop production at the University of Kentucky in summer 2026. We are recruiting a highly motivated M.S. graduate student who will focus on Integrated Pest Management (IPM) in fruit and/or vegetable cropping systems.

Project Overview: The graduate student's research will focus on the ecology and management of key arthropod pests and their natural enemies in specialty crops, with an emphasis on practical applications for IPM and resistance management. Projects will directly address the needs of Kentucky's robust and diverse community of fruit and vegetable growers and agricultural professionals. Potential project themes may include:

- Compatibility of pest management strategies, including biological control and chemical controls
- Pest monitoring, scouting, and trapping approaches
- Insecticide application technology and resistance management in specialty crops
- Food web dynamics and ecosystem services
- Insect behavior and movement within cropping systems
- Human dimensions of pest management (ie, how farmers make decisions)

This position is ideal for a student interested in extension-oriented research. The graduate student will be part of a team with significant extension responsibilities and will have opportunities to gain experience in:

- Translating research findings into grower-relevant recommendations
- Solving real-world pest management challenges
- Conducting applied, field-based research
- Communicating directly with farmers, extension personnel, and other stakeholders

Desired Qualifications: A strong interest in supporting crop producers and working directly with farmers; motivation and the ability to work independently, while contributing effectively to a collaborative team; good organizational and communication skills; research experience, including experimental design, field and/or laboratory data collection, data analysis and interpretation, and reporting results (written/oral).

UK Department of Entomology: The [UK Entomology Department](#) is comprised of over 20 faculty with expertise in numerous disciplines. The faculty, staff, and students are extremely energetic and passionate about their work. Students from our department have gone on to have successful careers in a variety of sectors, including academia, industry, and the government.

Life in Lexington: Lexington, Kentucky is a vibrant city that maintains a collegiate atmosphere. Ranked highly in the US News and World Report [Best Places to Live](#), Lexington boasts a wide variety of restaurants and shopping, and is close to some wonderful hiking trails ([Red River Gorge](#)) and convenient airport.

Start Date and Compensation: The successful applicant will start August 2026. The assistantship includes a competitive stipend, tuition, and health insurance.

Application Procedure: Interested applicants should submit the following via email (julie.peterson@uky.edu):

1. Cover letter describing your research experience, interests, and career goals
2. CV/Resume (including GPA and GRE scores, if taken)
3. Unofficial transcript(s)
4. Names and contact information for three references

Review of applications will begin **March 2, 2026**, and will continue until a suitable candidate is identified. Successful applicants will also be required to apply to the University of Kentucky Graduate School, but this can be completed at a later date.

Questions: Please direct all questions to Julie Peterson (julie.peterson@uky.edu).