

**Jailene Leyva**  
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## EDUCATION

### **Associate of Biology**

Harold Washington College

**Expected Summer 2026**

### **Bachelor of Biology and Environmental Science**

Minor in GIS

Northeastern Illinois University

**Expected Fall 2028**

## PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Passionate biology and environmental science student with hands-on experience in invasive species management, urban agriculture, and ecological restoration. Skilled in plant identification and ecological monitoring. Aiming to contribute to ecological conservation efforts through fieldwork and research in the Midwest. Also enthusiastic about being a role model for first-generation students in STEM given nontraditional academic career.

## RESEARCH INTERESTS

My research interests focus on ecological conservation, specifically regarding plant populations in the Upper Midwest region. I am particularly interested in investigating methods to improve invasive species management, with the goal of restoring native ecosystems and enhancing biodiversity through appropriate seed mixes. Additionally, I aim to explore strategies to maximize pollinator activity in urban environments, recognizing the critical role pollinators play in maintaining ecosystem health. As an undergraduate with hands-on field experience in invasive species management and urban agriculture, I am excited to build on this foundation through studying the impacts of native plant restoration, habitat fragmentation, and the role of urban green spaces in supporting local wildlife.

## HONORS AND AWARDS

Dean's Scholarship at DePaul University

Sep 2016 – Dec 2019

Dean's List at Harold Washington College

Fall 2024

## RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

### **Intern | Chicago Botanic Garden**

**May 2024 – Dec 2024**

- Landscape maintenance via removal of weedy/invasive plant and algae species by using herbicide and hand tools
- Replanting native species according to restoration management plans

- Participated in workshops, training sessions, and one-on-one or team-based projects to enhance conservation skills
- Assisted with native species monitoring and other projects in collaboration with students and staff
- Performed manual labor in support of natural areas restoration activities, such as seed cleaning

**Apprentice | Windy City Harvest**

**Feb 2023 – Oct 2023**

- Harvested and cultivate produce on a variety of urban farms for wholesale and retail markets under GAP standards
- Planted and transplanted flowers according to season for beautification of farms
- Used diverse weed control methods throughout the season

**Sales Associate | Green Spaces Plant Shop**

**May 2022 – Aug 2023**

- Cultivated relationships with neighborhood customers using houseplant knowledge
- Established daily routine and plant care rotation and manage shop independently
- Learned to identify new plants and mix different soil ratios

**Site Supervisor | Kellermeyer Bergensons Services**

**Mar 2018 – Sep 2021**

- Designed employee and task schedules to maximize efficiency and workload distribution
- Trained employees and maintained communication to promote a positive workplace
- Built relationships with Amazon managers and facility employees so our teams could operate smoothly and safely

**SKILLS**

- Technical: Copywriting, Entry level R-Studio, Entry level Erdas Imagine, Entry level ArcGIS, Plant identification, Google Workspace, Microsoft Office Suite
- Soft: Leadership, Teamwork, Time management, Communication, Problem-solving, Organization, Collaboration, Data Collection

**RELEVANT COURSEWORK**

- **Biology 121: General Biology I**  
An introductory course covering the fundamental principles of biology, including cell structure, cell functions, and genetics. Emphasis on the scientific method and laboratory techniques.
- **Biology 122: General Biology II**  
A continuation of Biology 121, focusing on ecology, physiology, and the interrelationships between organisms and their environment. The course also explores evolutionary processes and categories.
- **Chemistry 201: General Chemistry I**  
This course introduces the structure, properties, and reactions of chemical compounds and the structure of the atom. Topics include functional groups, reaction mechanisms, and the periodic table.

## CERTIFICATIONS

### **FEMA & NWCG**

**Dec 2024**

#### **Burn Training Certification**

Trained in wildfire prevention and response strategies, focusing on prescribed burns and managing fire behavior. This certification prepares individuals to safely and effectively conduct controlled burns to improve land management and restore ecological balance.

### **Forest Preserves of Cook County**

**Jul 2024**

#### **Chainsaw Feller 1**

Completed training in safe and effective chainsaw use for tree cutting and felling operations. The certification emphasizes risk management, proper techniques for cutting and felling trees, and adhering to safety standards in forest management.

### **Illinois Department of Agriculture**

**Jul 2024**

#### **Pesticide Operator License**

Certified in the safe handling, application, and disposal of pesticides. This license ensures that individuals are knowledgeable about the proper methods for applying chemicals to control invasive species, as well as understanding the impact of these chemicals on the environment and public health.

### **Richard J. Daley College**

**Oct 2023**

#### **Advanced Certificate in Sustainable Horticulture**

Gained expertise in sustainable gardening practices and plant propagation.. The certification focuses on techniques that promote environmental sustainability, such as water conservation, soil health, and the use of organic practices in horticultural operations.

### **Chicago Botanic Garden**

**Oct 2023**

#### **Certified in Sustainable Urban Agriculture**

Trained in sustainable farming and gardening techniques for urban environments. This certification includes knowledge in soil health, organic farming methods, and creating productive, environmentally responsible urban agriculture systems that improve food security in underserved neighborhoods.

### **Roots of Success**

**Oct 2023**

#### **Environmental Literacy Certificate**

A comprehensive program focused on environmental science, sustainability, and the role of individuals and communities in fostering environmental stewardship. The certificate emphasizes environmental literacy and practical applications for green careers and sustainable practices in various industries.

## LANGUAGES

Spanish: Fluent

Arabic: Intermediate

## **PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS**

### **Ecological Society of America (ESA)**

The ESA strives to promote public awareness of ecological science and provides academic and professional resources to ecological scientists. Currently an active member.

### **Society for Ecological Restoration (SER)**

The SER centers ecological restoration as an important vehicle for sustainable biodiversity and works to revive the connection between people and nature. Currently an active member.

## **PERSONAL INTERESTS**

- **Currently reading:**  
*Hammer and Hoe* by Robin D.G. Kelley
- **Camping and Swimming**  
Enjoy tent camping in the spring and fall, exploring natural areas and going on hikes with my tiny dog-- and swimming at the local park pool.
- **Sustainable Food Systems**  
Interest in food sovereignty, urban farming, and community-supported agriculture (CSA) programs.
- **Cooking**  
Experimenting with cooking methods that emphasize locally sourced, organic, and plant-based foods and reducing food waste. Love a good cookbook!
- **Cycling for Transportation**  
Using a bicycle as a secondary mode of transportation and for casual neighborhood exploration.