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## **2021 Ivarson Soil Science Scholarship Winner: Ms. Meaghan Mechler**

Ms. Mechler is University of Guelph PhD student studying plant agriculture whose research aims to provide effective and replicable treatments for Ontario apple growers facing a costly soil born disease, Apple Replant Disease (ARD). ARD is complex and poorly understood and has become a growing concern for growers with higher density orchard plantings. She is investigating the effectiveness of promising biocontrol treatments, which have additional potential benefits such as enhancing soil health and improving orchard resilience. Her objective is to reduce long-term ARD outbreaks in Ontario orchards by improving soil ecology and developing disease suppressive soils. It is hypothesized that introducing beneficial microbial species or supporting them with select rootstocks will reduce ARD and promote soil health.



Ms. Mechler is deeply passionate about education and sustainable agriculture and has served in many volunteer and leadership positions including the Ontario Graduate Student Representative for the Canadian Society of Horticultural Science, the University of Waterloo's Social Media Coordinator of Women in Science and the Director of Internal Affairs for the UW Sustainable Campus Initiative. She was also involved with Let's Talk Science for several years as a classroom science educator, speaker, and science fair judge.

Meaghan wants to contribute meaningful research in the fields of soil science and pomology, as well as to pursue an educator/researcher career. Having grown up on her family's farm in Wellington county, her interests in school continually surrounded land use and stewardship. As time went on, she became involved with local organizations that sought to improve and protect local land. Her future goal is to pursue a career in soil and agriculture academia where she can contribute as a researcher, teacher, and mentor.