What is your role in Operation Smart Water (OSW)?
I am supporting the team with community engagement on the Huerta del Valle Community Gardens Project. My role allows me to assist with the design and implementation of garden meetings, research, and the water conservation practices.

Why did you want to participate in OSW?
It is important to our team that we are supporting the project’s reach to the community. Assuring that the project is practical, applicable and replicable for both participating gardeners, and fellow garden members who will learn from them. I am involved to make sure the research serves their needs and that the whole community can benefit from the resources we are able to provide while at the same time coming to sound conclusions.

What has been your favorite experience with the project so far?
My favorite part of the project is the opportunity to bring new ways to assess water usage in community gardens and provide resources to help gardeners become more water wise. Often, as they mentioned, gardeners are told about the strategies for water conservation but then don’t have access to the materials to implement those strategies.

What do you see as the most valuable aspect of the work you’re doing with OSW?
I believe community gardens are such an integral part of urban resiliency. They provide autonomy in food production, cooling places, green space, access to the outdoors and habitat. I am excited to be part of a project that takes one aspect, water, and works with the community members to learn more and create change.

Any anecdotes from time spent on the project?
Huerta del Valle is such a bustling place. It is a joy to visit. There are always families there, the co-op is selling produce and every time we hold a meeting there, someone makes lemongrass and honey tea that is delicious and restorative. It was quite impressive to hear the participating gardeners narrow down all the aspects of gardening they wanted to research. While they finally settled on creating a research project around water usage methods, they also discussed the importance of knowing your soil and how water can help control pests and plagues. There is so much the gardeners could research and I am glad they are as interested as we are in the results.