

# TORONTO BOTANICAL GARDEN

## VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK



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# TORONTO BOTANICAL GARDEN

## VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

### **Welcome!!**

The staff and volunteers of the Toronto Botanical Garden staff welcome you! We hope you will enjoy your participation here.

Volunteers are essential to all aspects of Toronto Botanical Garden. We would not be where we are today without the dedication, commitment, integrity and professionalism of our volunteers.

This Volunteer handbook is a resource guide to provide you with information about Toronto Botanical Garden, including descriptions of our core programs, services, general staff and volunteer responsibilities.

Welcome to the Toronto Botanical Garden volunteer team.

### **Mandate**

Toronto Botanical Garden (TBG), formerly the Civic Garden Centre, was founded in 1958 and incorporated in 1963. We are a volunteer-based, charitable organization whose mission is to connect people to plants, fostering sustainable communities and developing reciprocal relationships with nature through lifelong learning.

Our vision is to be a garden for all; a diverse community that recognizes the life-giving role of nature, working together for a more sustainable world.

### **History**

- 1827: Alexander Milne, a loyalist, settled on the site and built several mills which his family operated for over 100 years.
- 1944: Rupert E. Edwards purchased the property and transformed it into a private garden and golf course.
- 1956: Mr. Edwards sold the property to the City of Toronto for \$153,000 to protect it from residential development. 'Edwards Gardens' was officially opened to the public, with the name reflecting the fact Mr. Edwards could have received more money by selling to developers.
- 1958: The Garden Club of Toronto and the Federation of Ontario Naturalists were headquartered in the old Milne House on the property.
- 1962: Milne House was destroyed by fire and Metro Council approved funds to establish the Civic Garden Centre in a building to be owned and maintained by Metro.
- 1964: The building designed by Raymond Moriyama was completed. Funding was provided by the Garden Club of Toronto and the Meadowvale Botanical Garden Trust, with \$100,000 from Metropolitan Toronto..
- 1976: An addition designed by Jerome Markson was officially opened in December.
- 1998: Opening of the Teaching Garden in Edwards Garden – a children's education

project envisioned and donated by the Garden Club of Toronto.

- 2005: \$6 million in renovations and additions to the original buildings were completed with 20% City of Toronto funding and 80% private funding, including a lead gift from Kathy and George Dembroski for whom the Centre for Horticulture is now named. The building includes the Weston Family Library, James Boyd Children's Centre and the Garden Shop at TBG.

## **General Information**

TBG is open 7 days a week for 51 weeks of the year. Operating funds are generated through membership dues, foundation grants, facility rentals, art shows, plant sales, garden shop, course fees, special events, lectures and donations.

The facilities are owned by the City of Toronto, which provides a grant of \$25,000 per year to assist with maintenance, plus paying for heat and hydro and major maintenance.

TBG is governed by a volunteer board that determines TBG's direction and policies. TBG is staffed by a small group of paid employees who manage the day to day operations. TBG departments include Horticulture, Learning, Marketing & Audience Engagement, Retail, and Development (membership, grants and donations). Other units or areas within the departments include the library, maintenance, rentals, and of course volunteers/tours. For up to date information on who is who please visit our website.

The departments are supported by volunteers in a wide variety of roles ranging from regular weekly volunteering for Reception, Weston Family Library and the Garden Shop, to seasonal roles including Gardening and Tour Guide roles, as well as assisting in delivery of Adult and Children's Education and representing TBG at fund raising and special events.

TBG relies upon volunteers to help run our many programs and to meet our vision. Our volunteers take a great deal of pride in the many contributions they make and often form close teams and enjoy each others' company for many years!

This handbook provides more information on what it means to be a volunteer at TBG, volunteer commitment and the volunteer code of conduct.

The various volunteer roles are also covered in more detail.

## **Programs and Services offered by TBG**

### **Adult Education: Courses and Programs**

Over 40 gardening and horticulture related courses are offered each trimester (Fall, Winter/Spring, Summer). TBG area: Adult Education

### **Horticultural Services**

A garden information telephone line is answered regularly by Toronto Master Gardeners. The Toronto Master Gardeners provide an “Ask a Master Gardener” service accessed on their website [www.torontomastergardeners.ca](http://www.torontomastergardeners.ca).

### **Lecture Series**

TBG offers monthly evening lectures featuring well-known speakers from around the world. TBG dept: Adult Education

### **Weston Family Library**

The Weston Family Library at TBG is Canada’s largest private horticultural library with over 9,000 books, 70 periodicals and a large collection of clippings, pamphlets, nursery and seed catalogues as well as a collection of children’s gardening books. The Library also has a growing collection of videos and CDs. The public may use the Library and members have free borrowing privileges. There is also a special booklovers membership category. The book catalogue and the subject index are available on-line at our website. TBG dept: Library (part of Learning dept.).

### **Major Fundraising and Special Events**

TBG offers many special events throughout the calendar year, providing opportunities for volunteers to get involved (wide variety of roles). Some of TBG’s main events are:

#### **Get the Jump on Spring & Seedy Saturday**

Taking place in early Spring, this annual horticultural societies Open House features speakers, workshops and exhibits, all designed to educate and inspire gardening enthusiasts for the gardening year ahead. The Seedy Saturday component is an opportunity to purchase seeds from a variety of suppliers as well as swap seeds (and contribute to the seed bank). The event is run by a volunteer committee, assisted by TBG staff. TBG dept: Learning.

## **The Plant Sale**

Held for 4-5 days in May. TBG depts: Horticulture and Retail.

## **Through the Garden Gate**

A very popular private garden tour attracting many visitors each year. This event is organized and run by volunteers and staff and is usually held on the second weekend in June. TBG dept: Development.

## **Rentals**

Any of the studios and auditoriums are available for rent for meetings, weddings, or special exhibits. TBG area: Rentals

**TBG Kids Education** offers programs for children from preschool to grade 6. Programs include curriculum-linked class visits during the school year, Living Winter, March break camp, summer camps, and a series of nature events. TBG dept: Children's Education.

**TBG Adult Education** offers a selection of workshops, seminars, symposiums and the monthly TBG lectures. TBG dept: Learning.

**The Garden Shop** offers unique gifts, floral art supplies and gardening books. TBG dept: Retail

## **Trellis Magazine**

This is a three to four issue per year on line magazine full of interesting articles and a calendar of events. The magazine has advertising opportunities for organizations who wish to promote their product, service or event (also advertising options on the TBG website). TBG dept: Marketing & Audience Engagement.

## **Tours:**

Tours are led by experienced volunteer tour guides and take place in the following locations:

### **TBG and Edwards Gardens Tours**

Pre booked, pre pay 90 minute tours are offered regularly from May to October (frequency depends on availability of tour guides). Tours cover the highlights of the plant collection and local history. Private group tours

may also be booked.

**Ravine Tours** – on offer from Spring through Fall, providing visitors’ with an experience of the beauty and also the challenges of these unique spaces. Approx. 1 hour into Wilket Creek ravine, rugged terrain, steps and slopes.

TBG dept: Volunteers and Tours

**Website**

[www.torontobotanicalgarden.ca](http://www.torontobotanicalgarden.ca) has been in operation since 2000, and serves to promote TBG, listing a calendar of events, courses, and information. It is also the site for online bookings for many activities including Tours and Courses. TBG dept: Marketing & Audience Engagement.



**Beryl Ivey knot garden**



## TBG Yearly Calendar of Events

Note this is a selection of the bigger/ongoing events that need volunteer help during a typical calendar year. There are many, many other smaller scale/shorter events providing additional interesting and rewarding volunteer opportunities.

### In a Typical Year

Saturday in early Spring – **Get the Jump on Spring & Seedy Saturday**

Mid-April – **Earth Day Events/ Eco Market**

Thursday-Monday, early to mid-May – **TBG Plant Sale**

Saturday-Sunday, early to mid-June– **Through the Garden Gate**

Thursdays afternoons to evening – Farmers Markets (late Spring to Fall)

Thursday evenings, July to end August – **Edwards Summer Music Series**

Saturday, late September – **Harvest Day**

Thursday - Sunday, late Nov to early December – **Holiday Open House**



**Woodland walk**

## Contact Information

### Toronto Botanical Garden

777 Lawrence Avenue East, Toronto, Ontario. M3C 1P2

Main number: 416-397-1341 Fax: 416-397-1354

Website: [www.torontobotanicalgarden.ca](http://www.torontobotanicalgarden.ca)

Email: [info@torontobotanicalgarden.ca](mailto:info@torontobotanicalgarden.ca)

For up to date contact information for individual depts please visit our website

[www.torontobotanicalgarden.ca](http://www.torontobotanicalgarden.ca)



**Kitchen garden**

## What it means to be a TBG Volunteer

### TBG's commitment to our Volunteers

The TBG Board and staff commit to adhering to the values, guiding principles and standards of practice in the **Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement (CCVI)**. The CCVI principles state that **volunteers have rights**. As a nonprofit organization we recognize that volunteers are a vital human resource and commit to appropriate infrastructure to support volunteer engagement. The CCVI principles also state that **volunteers have responsibilities**; you make a commitment and are accountable to the organization. These rights and responsibilities are captured below. More on the CCVI can be found on [www.volunteer.ca/content/canadian-code-volunteer-involvement](http://www.volunteer.ca/content/canadian-code-volunteer-involvement).

### Volunteer rights: As a volunteer you can expect:

- Full cooperation and appreciation from TBG staff;
- A dedicated resource (s) to manage the volunteer program and act as a liaison between volunteers and TBG. This resource is there to help make your volunteer experience be the best one possible, to provide you with:
  - ▲ information about your role, help answer any questions you may have and receive feedback from you about your volunteer experience.
  - ▲ feedback about your performance in your volunteer role
  - ▲ a written volunteer role description;
  - ▲ orientation, basic training, and additional learning opportunities;
  - ▲ recognition of your volunteer efforts; and
  - ▲ an up-to-date sign-up site for all volunteer opportunities.

### Benefits of Volunteering at TBG

- Make important networking contacts, meet new people, make new friends;
- Work in beautiful surroundings;
- Expand your education and gain work experience;
- Contribute to your community;
- Hear about events before the general public;
- Receive volunteer updates by email;
- Use of self-service on line sign-up for volunteer opportunities/scheduling that provides immediate confirmation of booking and timely reminders; and
- Free parking and discounts for Adult Ed courses for the calendar year in which you commenced volunteering (for volunteers who are not TBG members).

### Volunteer Reward and Recognition

TBG provides recognition for volunteer achievement and contribution in a variety of ways. These include educational events (lunch and learns, seminars and tours especially for TBG volunteers, specific training pre special event, and/or during

ongoing volunteer roles).

Volunteers with long service will be recognized at volunteer appreciation event (s) and on the TBG website.

In addition, individual volunteers and/or volunteer groups will be celebrated in Trellis and on TBG's website.

Each volunteer group has occasional lunches/social gatherings.

## **Volunteer Commitment to TBG**

### **Volunteer responsibilities: TBG asks all its volunteers to:**

- Attend initial and update training sessions
- Respond with timely use of volunteer scheduling system or timely completion of volunteer hours log forms (if not using volunteer scheduling system)
- Read all email communications (and provide timely response if requested).
- Accept any feedback in the spirit in which it is provided, namely to help you become the best in your volunteer role.
- Accept, support and comply with:
  - **TBG policies, programs and practices** as outlined in this handbook (health and safety, harassment, accessible visitor service plan & manual, confidentiality, etc.)
  - The **TBG volunteer code of conduct** (below). In particular, demonstrate respect for the public, staff and other volunteers.
  - Support **TBG's vision of working together for a more sustainable world**: TBG is committed to environmental sustainability education and action. All TBG employees and volunteers are expected to support any future greening initiatives which help to reduce the organization's ecological footprint. This may include learning about and participating in related discussions and activities. Thank you for your role in supporting any steps TBG takes to fulfill this vision.

## **TBG Volunteer Code of Conduct**

It is Toronto Botanical Garden's (TBG's) role to serve its membership and the public at large. In this regard, all volunteers are expected to treat staff, members, fellow volunteers and the public with a high degree of courtesy, efficiency and professionalism at all times and under all circumstances. All volunteers must keep in mind that they represent TBG and that their attitude, appearance and behaviour reflect on TBG and its image. Improper conduct will not be tolerated (also see feedback section below).

If you find yourself in a situation which is difficult and cannot be handled within your comfort level or degree of TBG knowledge, you should remove yourself from the situation before responding inappropriately and should refer the problem to the Head of Volunteer Services (or another TBG staff member). See guidelines on handling abusive callers/visitors as well.

**Customer Service:** As a service organization, TBG depends on all volunteers to display a high degree of customer service care at all times to members and the public at large.

**Cooperation:** TBG is a multifaceted organization and, as such, workloads can vary from department to department. Volunteers may be asked to help other departments when required and with a cooperative spirit.

**Dress Code:** As representatives of TBG, all volunteers must be dressed appropriately for their volunteer role and wear identifying TBG name tags at all times. For volunteers in customer service roles, appearance must be neatly attired and cleanly groomed at all times when on duty.

**Timeliness:** All volunteers are expected to be on time for their shift, punctual with respect to meetings, lunch breaks and other scheduled activities.

**Dependability:** All volunteer roles are important in the delivery of our events and services. Many volunteers operate as members of teams and these teams rely on members to be dependable (as well as timely) in order to provide smooth and efficient customer service. Dependability also means staying focused on your specific role for the duration of your shift, using your best judgement in carrying out your role and checking with a TBG staff member before changing the parameters of that role/switching roles.

**Feedback:** TBG values feedback from you after events/programs. Please do email the volunteer office with comments about anything you feel would improve your and/or other volunteers' experience; please feel free also to give suggestions about TBG's events and activities/programs.

TBG also aims to provide you with feedback on your performance in your role, with the goal to ensure the volunteer experience and performance is the best it can be for all parties.

**Volunteer Deployment:** In the event that there are more volunteers than required for an

activity (a happy challenge to have!) the staff in the relevant dept will determine who to invite/select for that role/event, the possibility of sharing shifts on alternate weeks will also be explored. Whilst recognizing length of service in a particular role will be a criteria, particularly for teams where continuity of experience is key (for example our year round services (Shop, Library and Reception), efforts will also be made to provide opportunities for volunteers who have not had a chance in that role/event. In the event a volunteer's skill, capabilities, attitude or behaviour are not a good match for a role, TBG reserves the right to redeploy to another role and/or remove that volunteer from the active volunteer roster.

## **TBG POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

### **Health and Safety Policy**

TBG is committed to the health and safety of its employees and volunteers. TBG is ultimately responsible for the health and safety of volunteers while working with us. TBG management will make every reasonable effort to provide a safe and healthy work environment in accordance with the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

As a volunteer you are entitled to adequate training and supervision in your specific volunteer assignment(s) for the purpose of protecting your health and safety.

Volunteers must protect their health and safety, and that of their fellow volunteers and TBG staff, by working in compliance with the law and the safe work practices and procedures established by TBG.

It is in the best interest of everyone to consider health and safety a priority in every activity.

### **Workplace Harassment:**

Every volunteer has a right to be free of discrimination, harassment and bullying in the workplace by the organization, its employees, its volunteers or by an agent of the organization because of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, handicap, age, marital status, family status or record of offenses (prohibited by the Ontario Human Rights Code).

Discrimination, harassment and bullying are an assault on an individual's dignity and may result in negative consequences for an individual in term of health and personal safety and for the organization in terms of poor morale and decreased productivity.

If you experience a situation that makes you uncomfortable contact the Head, Volunteer Services or the TBG staff member whose department you are volunteering for. Workplace harassment is grounds for dismissal.

## **Additional Guidelines/Policies**

**Smoking:** The City's smoking by-law prohibits smoking within 9 meters of a building. We have installed 3 metal tubular ashtrays – three-feet tall, silver-grey tubes with the labelled “Smoking Outpost”. One is in the Westview Terrace, one outside our front-door entrance and one outside the loading bay area. There is absolutely NO smoking near or in the garden straw bale shed, or the compost piles. We ask that you please adhere to this policy and assist others do so as well.

**Media and Reporters:** If any media personnel approach you without being accompanied by a TBG staff member, please report their presence immediately to our Marketing & Communications Department, or if no one is available there, to our Executive Director. We ask that you not speak to the media on behalf of the TBG.

**Alcohol:** It is against the law for any person to drink alcohol on the property of the Toronto Botanical Garden without a proper license. While volunteering for us and/or wearing your volunteer name badge/apron, volunteers must not drink alcohol. Please remember to return your TBG apron at end of your shift, and to take off your name badge when not on duty.

**Parking at the Garden:** All volunteers driving to the Toronto Botanical Garden are requested to park in the main parking lot, just south of the building. Access to this parking lot is off Leslie street, or Lawrence Ave West. There is absolutely NO parking in the Deliveries Entrance area.

Parking is free for TBG members (one of the many benefits of membership), and we sincerely hope that TBG volunteers will consider extending their support by becoming TBG members. TBG will also offer free parking to all TBG volunteers for the first calendar year when they joined as a volunteer, after which time we sincerely hope they will consider becoming a member!



## **Accessible Visitor Service Plan and Manual**

In accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2005 and the customer service standards required by the Act, all volunteers in roles where there is interaction with members of the public must be aware of and in agreement with TBG's Accessible Visitor Service Plan and Manual.

### **Accessible Visitor Service Plan**

**Guiding principles:** fostering independence, dignity, integration and equal opportunity

Toronto Botanical Garden is committed to excellence in serving all visitors including people with disabilities. Additionally, customized tours are available for groups with special needs.

#### **Assistive devices**

We will ensure that our staff and volunteers are trained and familiar with assistive devices that may be used by visitors with disabilities while they are at TBG.

#### **Communication**

We will communicate with people with disabilities in ways that take their disability into account.

#### **Service animals**

We welcome people with disabilities and their service animals. Service animals are allowed in all parts of our premises that are open to the public.

#### **Support persons**

A person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to have their support person accompany them to all parts of our premises that are open to the public.

Fees will not be charged for support persons who accompany someone with a disability solely to facilitate their participation in TBG programs and classes. (Otherwise, the support person will be charged the usual fee for the program or class.) We will notify customers of this through a notice posted at Reception, published in our Program Guides and quarterly magazine, and on TBG's website.

#### **Notice of temporary disruption**

In the event of a planned or unexpected disruption to services or facilities for visitors with disabilities, TBG will give notice promptly. Our clearly posted notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated length of time, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available. This notice will be placed at all TBG entrances and posted on TBG's website.

#### **Training for staff and volunteers**

TBG will provide accessible visitor service training to all staff and volunteers who deal

with the public.

### **Training will include:**

- an overview of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2005 and the customer service standards required by the Act;
- TBG's accessible visitor service plan;
- guidance in how to:
  - interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities;
  - interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person;
- re-training whenever any changes are made to TBG's accessible visitor service plan.

### **Feedback process**

Visitors who wish to provide feedback on the way TBG welcomes and assists people with disabilities are welcome to email, fill out a feedback card at Reception, or give their comments to a TBG staff member in person. All feedback will be directed to TBG's Director of Marketing and Communications. Correspondents can expect TBG's response to any concern within two business days. Complaints will be addressed according to our organization's regular complaint management procedures.

### **Modifications to this or other policies**

Any TBG policy that does not respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities will be amended or removed.

## **Toronto Botanical Garden Accessible Visitor Service Manual**

### **General context**

We want every visitor, guest, student or partner to leave TBG feeling really glad they were here, whether a person has a disability or not. Everyone deserves the same friendly, respectful help to take advantage of all the opportunities at TBG.

- Always **put the person first**, not their disability. A disability is only one aspect of a life; it's not the whole person. Always think of, and refer to, a "person with a disability," not "a disabled person."
- Take care with vocabulary; think and speak with **respect**. Don't use old or judgmental terms such as "handicap," "handicapped," "crippled," "retarded" or "dumb." These words are now considered disrespectful. Use "disability" or "disabled."
- If you are not sure about the type or level of a disability, wait until the individual informs you of their situation; **don't make assumptions**. Some types of disabilities have similar characteristics, and assumptions may easily be wrong.

## **General tips on providing service to visitors with disabilities**

- If you're not sure what to do, just ask “may I help you?” Visitors with disabilities know whether they need help and how you can most readily provide it.
- Speak directly to the visitor, not to his or her support person or companion.
- Avoid stereotypes; don't make assumptions about what type of disability or disabilities a person has. Some disabilities are not visible or immediately apparent.
- Take the time to get to know each visitor's needs, and focus on meeting those needs, just as you would with any other visitor.
- Be patient and listen carefully. People with some types of disabilities may need a little more time to process and respond.
- Learn the appropriate language and terminology to use when referring to people with disabilities.
- If you can't understand what a customer is saying, politely ask them to tell you again.
- Never touch or speak to service animals – they are working and have to keep their focus.
- Don't touch assistive devices, including wheelchairs, without permission.

## **Visitors who have vision loss**

Few people with vision loss are totally blind. Many have limited vision such as tunnel vision, where a person has a loss of peripheral or side vision, or a lack of central vision to perceive objects straight ahead. Some people can see the outlines of objects; others can see light sources and levels. Vision loss can restrict customers' abilities to read signs, locate landmarks or notice hazards. Some customers may use a guide dog or white cane, but others may not. Sometimes it may be difficult to tell if a person has vision loss.

## **Interacting/communicating**

- Don't assume the person can't see you.
- Don't touch the visitor without asking permission.
- Offer your elbow to guide the person. If he or she accepts, walk slowly, but wait for permission before doing so. Lead – don't pull.
- Identify landmarks or details to orient the visitor to the environment around him/her.
- Don't touch or speak to service animals – they are working and have to focus at all times.
- Don't leave your visitor in the middle of a room. Show him or her to a chair or other comfortable, anchor location such as a counter.
- If you need to leave your visitor, let him/her know you're leaving and that you'll be back soon.
- Identify yourself when you approach your visitor and speak directly to him or her,

even if he/she is accompanied by a companion.

- There is usually no need to raise your voice; a person with vision loss doesn't necessarily have hearing loss. Say your name even if you know the person well, as many voices sound similar.
- Be clear and precise when giving directions – e.g., two steps behind you, a meter to your left, etc. Don't use "over there" or point.
- If you're uncertain about how best to provide directions, ask the person how to do so.
- Don't be afraid or embarrassed to use words such as "see", "read" and "look." People with vision loss also use these words.
- When providing printed information, offer to read or describe or summarize it.

### **Visitors who are Deaf, oral deaf, deafened or hard of hearing**

People who are profoundly deaf may identify themselves as *culturally Deaf* or *oral deaf*. In Deaf culture, indicated by a capital "D," the term is used to describe a person who has severe to profound hearing loss, with little or no hearing.

*Oral deaf* is used to describe a person who was born deaf or became deaf before learning to speak, but is taught to speak and may not typically use American Sign Language.

*Deafened* describes a person who has lost their hearing slowly or suddenly in adulthood. Such a person may use visual cues such as captioning or computerized note-taking, speech reading or sign language.

*Hard of hearing* describes a person who uses their residual hearing and speech to communicate. The person may communicate by speech reading, hearing aids, sign language and/or communication devices.

**Types of assistance** customers may use: hearing aid, paper and pen, personal amplification device (e.g., Pocket Talker), phone amplifier, relay service, teletypewriter (TTY), hearing ear dog, support person such as a sign language interpreter.

### **Interacting/communicating**

- Attract the visitor's attention before speaking. Generally, the best way is with a gentle wave of your hand, a warm preliminary "hello," or if absolutely necessary, a gentle touch on the hand.
- Ask how you can help. Don't shout.
- Move to a well-lit area where the visitor can see your face.
- Don't put your hands in front of your face when speaking. Some people read lips.
- If necessary, ask if another way to communicate would be easier, for example, using a pen and paper.
- Be patient if you are using a pen and paper to communicate. American Sign Language may be the visitor's first language. It has its own grammatical rules and sentence structure.
- Look at and speak directly to the visitor. Address the visitor, not his/her support

person.

- Be clear and precise when giving directions, and repeat or rephrase if necessary. Confirm that the visitor understands you.
- If the person uses a hearing aid, reduce background noise or move to a quieter area, if possible, so the person can hear or concentrate better.
- Don't assume that the visitor knows sign language or reads lips.

### **Visitors who are deaf blind**

A person who is deaf blind can neither see nor hear to some degree. Many people who are deaf blind will be accompanied by an intervener, a professional who helps with communicating.

**Types of assistance** visitors may use: Braille, large print, print on paper (black felt marker on non-glossy white paper or using portable white and black boards), communication boards, hearing aid, monocular or magnifiers, TTY devices, white cane, service animal, support person.

### **Interacting/communicating**

- Don't assume what a person can or cannot do. Some people who are deaf blind have some sight or hearing, while others have neither.
- A visitor who is deaf blind is likely to explain to you how to communicate with him or her or give you an assistance card or a note explaining how to communicate with him or her.
- Identify yourself to the intervener when you approach a visitor who is deaf blind, but then speak directly to the visitor as you normally would, not to the intervener.
- Don't touch or address service animals – they are working and have to pay attention at all times.
- Don't suddenly touch a person who is deaf blind or touch them without permission.

### **Visitors with physical disabilities**

Only some people with physical disabilities use a visible assistive device. Someone with a spinal cord injury, arthritis, heart or lung conditions or amputation may manage quite independently but have difficulty with moving, standing, sitting or walking longer distances.

### **Interacting/communicating**

- Ask before you help. People with physical disabilities often have their own ways of doing things.
- Respect the visitor's personal space. Do not lean over him/her or on his/her assistive device.
- If you need to have a conversation of more than 30 seconds or so with someone who uses a wheelchair or a scooter, sit down so you can make eye contact at the

same level.

- If you have permission to move a person's wheelchair, don't leave them in an awkward, dangerous or undignified position, such as facing away from other people or in the path of opening doors.
- Speak naturally and directly to the visitor, not to his or her companion or support person.
- Don't touch personal items or equipment such as canes or wheelchairs without permission.
- Keep devices and equipment – your institution's items or the customer's personal items such as canes and walkers – within the visitor's convenient reach.
- If you have permission to move a person in a wheelchair, remember to:
  - Wait for and follow the person's instructions;
  - Confirm that the visitor is ready to move;
  - Describe what you're going to do before you do it;
  - Avoid uneven ground and objects;
  - Don't leave the person in an awkward, dangerous or undignified position such as facing a wall or in the path of a doorway.
- Let the visitor know about accessible features in the immediate area (i.e., automatic doors, accessible washrooms, elevators, ramps, etc.)

### **Visitors with mental health disabilities**

Mental health disability is a broad term for many disorders that can range in severity. Mental health disabilities are not as visible as many other types of disabilities. You may not know that a visitor has a mental health disability unless you're informed of it. If you sense or know that a customer has a mental health disability, be sure to treat them with the same respect and consideration you have for everyone else. If someone is experiencing difficulty controlling his or her symptoms, or is in a crisis, stay calm and reassuring and ask the visitor how you can best help.

A person with a mental health disability may have difficulty with one, several or none of these challenges: difficulty with sequences in conventional logic, hallucinations, depression, sudden mood swings, difficulty concentrating or remembering, a seeming lack of motivation.

**Types of assistance** a visitor might use: service animal, support person. Some service animals used for companionship/reassurance may be small animals that can be kept close, in a pocket, such as a ferret.

### **Interacting/communicating**

- Treat anyone with a mental health disability with the same respect and consideration you have for everyone else.
- Be patient.

- Be confident and reassuring. Listen carefully and work with the visitor to try to meet their needs.
- If someone appears to be in a crisis, ask him or her to tell you the best way to help.

### **Visitors who have intellectual or developmental disabilities**

People with intellectual or developmental disabilities may have difficulty doing many things most of us take for granted. These disabilities can mildly or profoundly limit the person's ability to learn, communicate, socialize and take care of their everyday needs. You may not know that someone has this type of disability unless you are told. As much as possible, treat visitors with an intellectual or developmental disability like anyone else. They may understand more than you think, and will always appreciate respectful treatment.

**Types of assistance** visitors may use: communication board, speech generating device, service animal, support person.

### **Interacting/communicating**

- Don't make any assumptions about what a person can or cannot do.
- Use plain language and speak in short sentences.
- To confirm whether the visitor understands what you have said, consider asking the person to repeat the message back to you in his or her own words.
- If you cannot understand what is being said, simply ask again.
- Provide one piece of information at a time.
- Be supportive and patient.
- Speak directly to the visitor, not to their companion or support person.

### **Visitors who have learning disabilities**

The term "learning disability" describes a range of information processing disorders that can affect the way a person acquires, organizes, expresses, retains, understands or uses verbal or non-verbal information. Examples include dyslexia (problems in reading and related language-based learning); dyscalculia (problems in mathematics); and dysgraphia (problems in writing and fine motor skills).

It is important to know that having a learning disability does not mean a person is incapable of learning, only that they learn in a different way. Learning disabilities can result in different communication difficulties, which may be subtle, such as difficulty reading, or more pronounced. They can interfere with a visitor's ability to receive, express or process information, but may nonetheless be difficult to detect. You may not know that a person has a learning disability unless you are told.

**Types of assistance** visitors may use: alternative technology for writing, calculator, scanning or reading devices, tape recorders, mini pocket recorders.

## **Interacting/communicating**

- When you see that someone with a learning disability needs help, ask how you can help.
- Communicate by means of a method that takes into account the visitor's disability.
- Speak naturally, clearly, and directly to the visitor.
- Allow extra time if necessary – the visitor may take a little longer to understand and respond.
- Be patient and willing to explain something again if needed.

## **Visitors who have speech or language impairments**

Cerebral palsy, hearing loss or other conditions may make it difficult to pronounce words or cause slurring or stuttering. They also may prevent self-expression or the understanding of written or spoken language. Some people who have severe difficulties may use communication boards or other assistive devices.

**Types of assistance** visitors may use: communication board, paper and pen, speech generating device, support person.

## **Interacting/communicating**

- Don't assume that because a person has one disability they also have another. For example, if a visitor has difficulty speaking, it doesn't mean they have an intellectual disability as well.
- Ask the visitor to repeat their information if you don't understand.
- Ask questions that can be answered "yes" or "no" if possible.
- Allow enough time to communicate at the visitor's own pace.
- Don't interrupt or finish the visitor's sentences. Wait for them to finish.

## **Interacting/communicating with people with disabilities over the phone**

- Introduce yourself clearly.
- Speak naturally, clearly and directly.
- Don't zone in on how the person's voice sounds. Concentrate on what they are saying.
- Don't interrupt or finish the person's sentences. Give the person time to explain or respond.
- If you don't understand, simply ask again, or repeat or rephrase what you heard and ask if you have understood correctly.
- If the person is using an interpreter or a relay service, speak naturally to the person, not to the interpreter.
- If you encounter a situation where you and the person on the phone cannot communicate with each other effectively due to the customer's disability,



consider making alternate arrangements.

- If you cannot complete your interaction, clearly explain what will happen next. Make another appointment for a time when assistance will be available. Leave your contact information in case it will be needed in the meantime.

## **TBG Volunteer Background Screening**

All volunteers who are connected with our children's programs will have an additional vetting process to ensure the safety for our students and to minimize liability to TBG staff and volunteers.

In addition to an interview with the Head, Volunteer Services (or other member of senior TBG staff) volunteers interested in a regular\* volunteer role with TBG Childrens Education programs will be required to provide TBG with a Toronto Police Service (TPS) "Clearance Check". Details on the TPS check process can be found on <http://www.torontopolice.o.ca/recordsmanagement/clearance.php>.

\*"regular" refers to those volunteers who will or intend to be involved with TBG Childrens Education programs/Camps on a repeated basis, a minimum of 5 days or longer, in any year.

The TPS check, which usually takes 5-15 days to procure results, should ideally be completed prior to commencing their volunteer role. In the unusual circumstance where a volunteer needs to commence their role prior to the TPS Check results being known, TBG will accept a receipt of application as proof of application until they receive the actual clearance letter.

TBG will reimburse the volunteer for the cost of the TPS check.

Only regular TBG Childrens Education volunteers will be eligible to be involved with Camps. However, for TBG Childrens Education school programs there may be occasions when last minute volunteer help is needed and these spots filled by other TBG volunteers. In these temporary cover situations where a volunteer has been kind enough to step forward and help out, it is not feasible to require this individual to obtain a TPS check. In these situations the volunteer(s) will be closely supervised by TBG Childrens Education staff member at all times.

In addition, new volunteers, regardless of their check status, are not left unsupervised with students at any time during their early volunteer work with TBG Childrens Education programs. On their first day TBG teachers keep a close watch on the new volunteer. If they are deemed inappropriate to continue to work with our student groups their name will be passed back to Head, Volunteer Services for reassignment elsewhere in the organization (where possible and appropriate). If they do well, we will put their details on our TBG Childrens Education volunteer contact list to be contacted for future events. TPS checks are deemed valid for a 12 month period after which time they will need to be renewed. It is the volunteer's responsibility to ensure continued renewal as required.

All TPS checks are considered confidential and are kept with the Head, Volunteer Services.

## **TBG Volunteer Confidentiality Statement**

TBG has a strict obligation to keep its staff, members', donors', students', and volunteers' personal and financial information confidential. This is important not only for maintaining their trust in (and support for) TBG, it is also required by Canada's privacy legislation. Any breach of confidentiality could endanger TBG's status as a registered charitable organization. Any volunteer whose role results in access to such confidential personal and financial information is asked to read and sign the TBG confidentiality statement.

### **Sample Confidentiality Statement:**

#### **TBG Volunteer – Confidentiality Statement**

Dear,

Toronto Botanical Garden (TBG) has a strict obligation to keep its staff, members', donors', students', and volunteers' personal and financial information confidential.

This is important not only for maintaining their trust in TBG (and their support of TBG!); it is also required by Canada's privacy legislation. Any breach of confidentiality could endanger TBG's status as a registered charitable organization.

Your generous assistance as a volunteer in the [TBG volunteer role] may result in access to such confidential personal and financial information. By accepting this volunteer role, you are agreeing that at all times during and after your volunteer period you will maintain the confidentiality of all information disclosed orally, in writing or electronically during the course of your assistance to TBG.

Please sign and date below to acknowledge that you fully understand and agree to comply with this statement.

Thank you so much for volunteering with Toronto Botanical Garden.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Volunteer

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
TBG Staff Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

# Sample Parental Consent Form for Youth Volunteers

## TBG Volunteers Volunteer Waiver

I understand that my child will participate as a volunteer for TBG, specifically with [specify role] but also in [specify additional future volunteer activities such as future TBG special events and educational programs]

I agree that TBG, its trustees, officers, directors, employees, agents and independent contractors shall not be liable for any injury to my child or any loss/damage to my child's personal property arising from, or in any way resulting from, my child's participation in these volunteer activities.

I confirm that I have provided TBG staff with a full account of any health or medical conditions affecting my child. I authorize TBG to administer first aid to my child and to secure medical care for my child in an emergency as deemed appropriate by EMS personnel or attending physician(s).

I acknowledge that I have read this form in full and understand all of its contents, and confirm that I am the parent or legal guardian of the child mentioned herein who is a minor. I confirm that I have the complete custody, care and control of the minor and have the legal authority to agree to this consent and waiver on behalf of the minor and that the consent of no other person or entity is required.

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **VOLUNTEER ROLES**

There are a wide variety of regular and seasonal volunteer roles, all of which are essential to enable TBG to meet its mission and vision.

These volunteer roles range from helping with adult and children's education to gardening, meet-and-greet roles, specific duties in the Weston Family Library, reception and shop as well as leading tours and helping at special events.

Volunteers are vital to TBG. You don't have to be a horticultural expert to enjoy the satisfaction of being a TBG volunteer, although a passion for gardening and the natural world helps! Previous horticultural or gardening experience may be useful in some of our roles but it is not necessary, as training is available to assist you in developing skills and talents needed for your volunteer role.

This training often takes place by "shadowing" an experienced volunteer in the role, but also includes orientation meetings (for example just before a special event) and written material in manuals for reading. TBG's volunteer office is also there to help make sure your volunteer experience with us is a positive and productive one!

The role and "day in the life of" documents that follow aim to provide the most practical description of what each role entails.

Many of these roles rely on a regular weekly commitment from volunteers; others are more seasonal in nature. All are highly valued by TBG. We simply could not maintain our beautiful gardens and offer our many programs and events without our volunteers!

Thank you



## **Administration**

From time to time opportunities arise to assist a TBG staff member or department or a TBG volunteer committee in an administrative capacity. This could involve event-planning activities, assistance with writing grants or articles, research, helping with accounting tasks, or co-ordination of an activity or event. Occasional help is also needed with office administrative and clerical duties such as database update and management, filing, collating, stuffing envelopes etc.

Some of these roles will be seasonal or special event related; others provide an opportunity for a long-term connection with TBG.

### **Adult Education Course Ambassador Job Description**

#### **Purpose:**

Adult Education courses run all throughout the week during and beyond office hours. Course Ambassadors are a key part of the Adult Education Team, to be the ‘face of the TBG’ for both instructors and students when staff cannot be present or additional support is needed.

#### **Benefits:**

- Complimentary admittance to courses that you volunteer for – any course material fees are not included.
- Opportunity to see behind the scenes how the TBG runs Adult Education courses.
- Meet new people (students and instructors) and learn about a variety of subjects connected to nature.

#### **Time Commitment:**

Most volunteer opportunities are with courses taking place during evenings and weekends as the Adult Education Supervisor will cover most week-day daytime classes.

- Courses run from 2 to 6 hours in length, and sometimes over multiple days or weeks.
- Course Ambassadors should be prepared to arrive half an hour before the course starts and stay 20 minutes after the course concludes.
- The Adult Education Supervisor will post all volunteer opportunities on Sign up.com and email out a reminder to sign-up.

Volunteers can sign up directly online or contact the Adult Education Supervisor if they do not have web access. Be sure to sign up for courses based on your availability and interests. If you are unable to fill a Course Ambassador shift you have signed up for, please notify the Adult Education Supervisor or, update signup accordingly.

## **TASKS:**

### *Before Class...*

- Arrive 30 minutes before the class is scheduled to start
- Obtain the course pack which can be found in the classroom or on the Adult education supervisor's desk.
- Ensure the classroom is properly arranged, open and clean.
- Ensure that the screen by the building entrance displays the location of the course/workshops.
- Call Maintenance if there are any problems - phones are available in the conference room and boardroom. The contact number for maintenance is in the course pack.
- Assist the instructor as required with set-up, A/V equipment, bringing supplies to classroom etc.
- Place student evaluation forms on top of the table.

### *At the Start of Class...*

- Welcome students and instructor as they arrive.
- Take attendance of students.
  
- Process walk-ins by filling out registration forms and collecting payment (exact change preferred).
- Kick-off the class with a welcome to the TBG and an introduction of both the instructor and TBG.

### *During Class...*

- Take notes on your impression of the class: how was the instructor? Did the course meet your expectations as outlined in the program guide? How were the handouts? Etc.

### *At the End of Class...*

- Collect student evaluation forms.
- Drop off course package complete with evaluation forms, your notes and any walk-in payments in the library drop slot.
- Check to ensure all students and instructor have taken their personal belongs from the classroom

# Volunteer in the Garden: Fact sheet and Day in the Life of

## Fact Sheet

Toronto Botanical Garden's Horticulture Department has one orientation session in early spring each year for new volunteers in the garden. Attending this orientation session is **strongly recommended** for anyone who wishes to participate as a volunteer in the garden for the TBG. It is for those able to commit to volunteering in the garden for the balance of the gardening season (spring to fall) although we recognize the need to flex to accommodate vacations, family commitments etc.

This orientation is mandatory as it covers key information about the role including the minimum requirements to volunteer and important health and safety information. These are also covered in a handbook specifically for garden volunteers.

After attending the orientation session, and fulfilling the minimum requirements which will be explained in detail during this session, you will be scheduled to volunteer in the garden. This involves selecting the day of your shift for the coming gardening season.

Days for volunteering in the garden are Tuesdays, Wednesdays, or Thursdays. You will be asked to pick which day you can commit to regularly. Depending on the number of new volunteer recruits, you may be able to participate weekly, but no less than biweekly. TBG will provide you with a pair of complimentary gloves on your first shift. TBG is also able to provide most tools, but is not able to supply secateurs for everyone; anyone who has a pair should please bring them. Please dress according to weather conditions. It is advisable to dress in appropriate layers, whether hot or cold, as they can easily be removed or added. Please note that it is mandatory to wear closed-toe shoes, such as running shoes or comfortable boots. No flip-flops, sandals or dress shoes will be permitted.

All volunteers in the garden meet at 8.00 am at the straw bale shed for their four-hour shift, ending at 12:00 pm. If you are unable to make your shift, will be late, or can only stay for a portion of the scheduled time, please contact the Garden staff directly. Volunteers break mid morning for 30 minutes. Depending on the weather, you may wish to take more frequent, shorter breaks.

All volunteers in the garden report to the seasonal horticulturists who will provide instruction as well as demonstrating the gardening tasks for the day. You may be instructed to perform a number of different tasks in any one of the themed gardens that make up TBG. This will include planting, cutting back, dead-heading, soil amendment, removal of pests, watering, composting, and so on. Of course, weeding is the most regular of regular tasks

– there is never an end to the weeding, but weeding is good for the gardening soul!

In no time, you will learn the ropes, and we hope to make your time in the garden not only a learning experience, but one that you will look forward to.



## **A Day in the Life of a Volunteer in the Garden at the TBG**

You arrive at the straw bale shed at 8.00am on your day, the day you will be coming on a weekly/biweekly basis for the gardening season. You join your fellow volunteers to receive instruction on the gardening tasks of the day from the Seasonal Horticulturist

Before leaving home you checked the weather forecast, and have brought a bottle of water, sunscreen and a hat as it promises to be a hot day! You have brought a couple of layers of clothing for sun protection and you also made sure to wear a pair of comfortable running shoes. You have also brought the gloves you received at the beginning of your volunteer period.

The Hort staff meet you and your fellow volunteers and provides detailed instructions for the day. Last week it was spring clean-up, this week it is weeding in the Woodland Walk. Your group will be joined by an experienced gardening volunteer who is on hand to provide general guidance and answer questions about the day-to-day, ins and outs, of volunteering in the garden. You set about your gardening reassured that if you have any task-related questions the Hort staff are never too far away to ask.

After a couple of hours the volunteer group takes a break in the volunteer lounge, enjoying a chance to relax, chat, and catch up on the news with group members - and simply to get to know each other. Then it is back out again to finish the work, ending at 12.00 pm. Your last tasks are also important ones: cleaning up and putting away tools and filling in the hours on your volunteer hours log sheet.

You then head home tired but satisfied, knowing that you have made a difference to a garden space and practiced your plant and weed identification skills as well!

Best Gardening: The Horticulture Team!

## GARDEN AMBASSADORS

As a TBG Garden Ambassador you will be out in our gardens on hand to greet visitors warmly. You are the face of the organization, animating our gardens to help maximize the visitor experience (and to minimize the amount of questions our volunteer gardeners/reception/shop have to handle!)

Garden Ambassadors are there to offer assistance to our visitors if needed. This may include:

- answering any immediate questions they may have
- directing visitors to areas in the garden/building that might be of most interest to them
- promoting what is on that day/what is in bloom (and where to find it)
- providing more information /brochures if visitors express interest in a TBG program/activity
- Occasional opportunities to be stationed at Discovery cart engaging with and educating visitors through its informational displays.

In addition, you are the eyes and ears for TBG leadership, helping monitor visitor numbers and collecting feedback from visitors.

Skills required: an outgoing personality, good communication skills (listening as well as speaking,) knowledge of and enthusiasm for TBG, a winning smile, comfort with an active, on-your-feet role for a 3-hour shift, able to connect with people with ease and be responsive without being overwhelming.

Time commitment: 3 hour shift.

As a minimum goal it is hoped that TBG will have the benefit of Garden Ambassadors active on days that have special events/activities scheduled and on days with high visitor traffic (weekends from May to October). Eventually, as numbers in the team increase and the role evolves, we hope to have an Ambassador presence in the gardens on weekdays as well.

Weekdays – Thursday and Fridays	Weekends
	10am – 1pm
	1pm – 4pm
4pm – 8pm	4pm – 7pm

Training for this role will be provided. Volunteers are asked to commit to this role for at least one season (May – October) in order to maximize the benefits of the training and value of continuity in the role.

## **Day in life of a Library Volunteer**

### **Circulation Desk Volunteer**

You arrive for your 3-hour volunteer shift in the Weston Family Library, which for you is 10.30 am on a Tuesday. Your fellow library volunteers cover other 3 or 4 hour shifts ensuring the library can be open from 10.30 to 4.30pm on weekdays and between 12 and 4 pm on weekends.

Upon arrival you check in with TBG's Weston Family Library Manager (Library Manager) and say hello to any volunteer colleague who is looking after the Reception desk alongside you. Next, you open the Library for the day, which includes unlocking and opening the Library doors, and checking the book drop for any materials that have been returned overnight.

This morning you find there are several email enquiries that require a response. These typically involve renewing a patron's books, searching the catalogue to locate library materials, and answering the email query.

During the next few hours several visitors have queries you can assist with, for example:

“How long can I take this book out for?”

“Can I renew it if I need to?”

“When is it due back?”

“I'm looking for a book by...on... titled...can you help me?”

“How can I borrow books from this Library?”

You also assist two members to borrow books using the online circulation system to record the loan details and stamp the due date to ensure the member knows when the books are due back.

You also have time to process two payments from a recent book sale. This entails counting and collecting money, and providing change. You also assist the Library Manager by creating a book display of the Library's newest titles.

At the end of your shift you make sure that the afternoon volunteer has arrived, and if you were in the middle of a project, let the next volunteer know at which stage you left it. If your shift was at the end of the day you make sure to close the library, following proper procedures, and let the Library Manager know you are finished your shift.

### **Volunteer cataloguers:**

There may be specific shifts for cataloguing tasks as determined by Library Manager. Time commitments for cataloguers are flexible depending on the cataloguing project underway, and so they can take place anytime during library hours.

In your cataloguing role you are responsible for performing traditional cataloguing of

library materials, adhering to AACR2 and MARC standards.

You use the library's web-based integrated library system (Koha) to perform original or derived cataloguing of books, serials, and some audiovisual collections (e.g. DVDs, audiobooks, etc.).

It is a steady role and you enjoy the congenial surroundings and the interaction with fellow volunteers. It is also a very satisfying role enabling you to use your expertise and keep up to date with state of the art web based library systems. At the end of your shift you check in with the Library Manager to share your progress.

## **A Day in the Life of a Reception Volunteer Morning Shift**

You arrive at 10:20 am in time for the start of your shift. You turn on the lights, unlock cupboards check out the listing of events due to take place in the building, and any updates on TBG's website, your main source of updates and information.

Next you take care of phone messages (this usually takes up to 30 minutes). Enquiries can range from enquiries to rent space for an event; wanting to know about the status of a course sign up – “is there still room” to “How do I become a member?” “I want to renew my membership”, “What are your hours of opening?” “I would like to come on a tour” etc. You respond to these enquiries either directly (if you know the answer) or make sure you connect with the relevant TBG staff member (phone or email not in person) to pass the enquiry on.

Having looked after the phone messages, you turn your attention to the emails. You take the necessary action depending on the topic. This could be:

- Forward queries to the relevant TBG staff member
- Reply to general questions regarding TBG programs, events, membership, lecture series, shop, location etc.
- Research questions regarding various horticultural societies, Toronto parks and Toronto amenities from out-of-towners.

During your shift the lobby is busy with an event taking place in the Floral Hall as well as a Children's Education event in the Children's Centre.

On previous days you have helped visitors with providing a wheelchair (following the sign-out procedure for this) and today you provide several visiting families with a Map handout (a frequently asked question). You also sign up two walk-ins and 3 phone-ins for programs and membership. Dropping off paperwork into the relevant TBG staff mail box. Other activities you typically get involved with include:

- Answer Library phone when library volunteer is away from the desk or unavailable
- Sign for courier delivered packages for TBG staff.

You hand over to the afternoon receptionist, briefing him/her on any relevant issues that have occurred.

It has been a busy morning with lots of interaction with people and a variety of administrative work; time has flown by! You leave with the satisfaction that you have helped provide a welcoming and professional face for TBG and helped a range of people with enquiries.

## **A Day in life of a Garden Shop Volunteer**

You arrive at 10.20 am for your 3 hour volunteer shift in the Garden Shop, which for you start at 10:30 am. Your fellow TBG shop volunteers cover other 3 or 4 hour shifts ensuring the Shop can be open from 10.30 am to 4.30 pm daily (7 days a week). You have remembered to wear your name tag so that customers can know you by name.

Since you are the first morning shift volunteer to arrive you collect the key for the Shop from Reception, open the doors and then make sure you return the key to Reception ready for the next volunteer who needs it. Your fellow TBG volunteer arrives minutes later and you put on a TBG apron (optional) and then sort out who does what task to have the Shop ready for customers. These next tasks include:

- 1) Making sure the shop lights are on and radio is on loud enough for customers to hear clearly throughout the Shop, and doing a quick check around the Shop together taking note of any new Shop arrangements or new products. Log in and read /review all messages on the terminal.
  
- 2) Your final activity is to move the display items to the outer entrance of the Shop. These can vary with the season (for example bulbs in the spring). With these checks and set up activities done, you are ready and well prepared for customers from 10.30 am!

During this particular shift the Shop has a steady stream of visitors you greet with a friendly “good morning” and a smile. Record each person who enters with the ‘clicker.’ You wander through the Shop asking open-ended questions and assisting customers in making their purchases with your product knowledge. You move through the Shop looking for product to restock as necessary.

You are regularly assisting customers with their credit card purchases, wrapping/packaging their items, stapling their receipt to the bill, making sure they have everything they need. To be eco-conscious, you ask the customer if they have a bag or can take the purchase without a bag.

When visitors are browsing and during quiet periods there are a number of activities to keep you busy. If the phone rings you answer “Garden Shop, Toronto Botanical Garden” and endeavour to help the caller with their query. There are also messages left on the phone that you need to pick up and follow through on. This may simply be leaving a message for the Shop Manager or responding to the caller’s question yourself. Typical

questions include:

“Do you sell ....?” “What hours are you open?” “Can I speak with (name) shop supervisor?”

For this latter enquiry you would save the message and either let the Shop Manager know if they are in that day or send them a message through the terminal advising there is a message waiting for them.

Other activities to look after will be determined by the season/products/ instructions left by the Shop Manager but can include:

Checking to see if any of the live plants need watering; ensuring general tidiness of the Shop (i.e.: sweeping); making sure there is a good supply of bags and tissue paper at the cashier counter, restocking some displays if they are obviously in need of more product (i.e.: honey shelf).

Some of these activities may entail heading down the stairs to the basement storage area to source new supplies.

You also make sure you consult the Shop Manual to make sure any new procedures/updates are noted. When you first began your shifts, shadowing an experienced volunteer for several days, you read through this manual every time to become familiar with standard procedures, for example what to do with returns, gift certificates etc. You also keep on top of TBG news and upcoming events because visitors often ask general questions as you are the first TBG representative they meet upon arrival in the building.

When the Shop is quiet you briefly leave your fellow volunteer to take a break and grab a coffee from the kitchen upstairs.

At the end of your shift you and your fellow volunteer greet the afternoon volunteers who arrive by 1.20pm to have time for a handover of any outstanding / on-going activities before their shift begins.

If your shift is in the afternoon from 1.30 to 4.30 PM, you arrive by 1.20 PM and get any updates/instructions from the AM team. Your activities are identical to the AM shift's when greeting and assisting our customers. At the end of the day at 4.30 PM, bring in any displays that are outside the Shop. Place the Closed sign in front of the doors and lock the doors.

You will then turn off all lights in the basement and in the shop, and the radio. You write

a note of any instructions/messages that may be necessary for next team or shop Manager.

It has been a busy morning or afternoon with lots of interaction with people and a variety of administrative work; time has flown by!

You leave with the satisfaction that you have helped provide a welcoming and professional face for TBG, helped a range of people with enquiries and purchases, and helped a valued group make a useful contribution to TBG.





## **A Day in the Life of a Special Event Volunteer** **(example of an off site event)**

Having seen the communication from TBG's volunteer office, you note that an upcoming special event needs volunteer help. You can make that day and time, and from the role description it looks like one you could do well and enjoy! You sign up for your spot, following the link to the sign-up site for the event and you make a note in your diary.

Since this is a big special event there is an orientation meeting, so you sign up for this as well. You receive a reminder email the day before the orientation meeting and you head over to TBG/sign up with Zoom. You hear more detailed information about the event, TBG's activity there and your specific role. Everyone is very upbeat and excited about this event and you leave enthusiastic and looking forward to the day itself.

You receive a reminder email a day before the event and make sure you are there on time to check in with the TBG staff member you are helping. Since this is an outdoor event and you will be standing for most of the time, you checked the weather report and brought comfortable shoes and some snacks/water with you.

Upon arrival you are given a warm and grateful welcome, and a TBG apron to wear. The TBG booth is looking great and you are able to help with some final set-up activities (for example, arranging brochures and magazines in eye-catching displays and unpacking the final pots of honey).

The morning starts slowly, with visitors to the event trickling in. This gives you time to fully orient yourself to the material on display, see where everything is located and refresh your memory on some key facts about TBG (so you are ready for any questions!). From mid morning to the end of your shift the TBG booth is buzzing with activity! You really enjoy chatting with the many visitors, handing out brochures, answering questions and even making a few sales. You were surprised at how many people did not know much about TBG and you particularly enjoyed interacting with the young children who were drawn to the booth by the honey display. You helped re-stock the displays twice during the morning and were continually maintaining the booth material in a tidy, eye-catching lay-out. Time just flew by! When your replacement for the next shift arrives you take a few minutes to help orient him/her to the site, what is where, the most popular items and frequently asked questions etc; then you hand over your apron, and go mingle at the event for yourself.

It was a busy but very enjoyable 3 hours. You lost count of the number of people you interacted with, you learned some interesting facts yourself as well and you really felt you made a useful contribution. Oh, and you remembered to remove your name tag for the journey home (!)

## **TBG Tour Guides: Toronto Botanical Garden/Wilket Creek Ravine/ general public and private groups.**

As a TBG Tour Guide you will create one of the first ways the public gains an impression of the Toronto Botanical Garden. As such, we are proud to be able to work with our guides to provide excellence in service and public education.

### **Responsibilities of a Tour Guide**

- Provide polite, courteous and friendly tour experiences for the public;
- Study materials given as these provide suggested talking points to make at each stop, supplementary information about the planting/history if needed.
- Lead tours arriving ahead of time for quick check of route to take note of any particular feature worthy to point out/change to planting;
- Interact with different groups and their questions, as each tour is unique;
- Keep up to date on what is happening in and around TBG. Study new tour learning materials as they are developed and made available. Where possible attend tour guide meetings for education and update;
- New guides will shadow at least 3 tours with an experienced guide;
- Experienced guides will lead at least two tours a month during the main tour season (usually mid-May to mid October for TBG, occasionally into late October for Ravine tours (dependent upon weather and Fall colour display);
- If unable to make the tour assigned, find a replacement tour guide (a contact list for guides is provided and will be updated should changes occur); and
- Keep the Head, Volunteer Services apprised promptly of any changes, issue or difficulties, and provide any salient feedback from tour experience.

### **Benefits of volunteering as a Tour Guide**

- Personal satisfaction of learning about gardening, plants, history, and what is going on at TBG and using that knowledge;
- Interaction with groups of visitors, receiving thanks from participants- most are very grateful and amazed at the gardens, a very pleasant experience for all;
- Networking with other Tour Guides

### **Skills required for a Tour Guide**

- Excellent people skills – able to connect with people with ease; the number one requirement is the guide must like people!;
- Flexibility: each group is different so flexibility is key while still keeping true to tour guide materials;
- Knowledge: a general love of the garden is all a tour guide needs to get started.

- Commitment to learn, prepare ahead of time, grow, develop and succeed at all TBG tours and events in which you are involved; and
- Enthusiasm for TBG, a winning smile, comfort with an active, on-your-feet role.

The Toronto Botanical Garden expects all employees and volunteers to ensure that their personal interests do not in any way conflict with or appear to conflict with their tour guide duties and obligations to the TBG.

## **A Day in the Life of a Volunteer Tour Guide**

Although every group is different, from groups of seniors to school-age students, to corporate groups and visiting horticultural societies, the narrative below tries to capture some common experiences as a tour guide.

Having signed up to lead a tour, you have some information ahead of time (number in group, type of group, whether there are any special needs or request for a particular theme to the tour). Also the fact that they have booked the one hour tour of TBG (not the 90-minute tour of TBG plus a segment of Edwards Gardens).

You read through the tour script again to refresh your memory. (many tour guides make notes on prompt cards, capturing the main points of note about each garden space.) You also check “What’s in Bloom” on the TBG website as these are the plants you are most likely to get questions about. You arrive at TBG 30 minutes before the tour start time; remembering to bring your name badge with you and dressing appropriately for the forecasted weather conditions (tours take place rain or shine!). You take a quick walk around the gardens so you are up to date on what is in bloom, where some “special” spots are, any new developments in the garden plantings. You also look at the displays in the planters.

At the tour’s start time you are on hand at the entrance to the building, ready to greet the group as they arrive. You know the name of the group contact; having introduced yourself, you wait until the group has assembled ready to start the tour. You know that they are paying by credit card so there is no need to collect cash or cheque payments.

These are now “your group” for the next 60-90 minutes. Having introduced yourself to the group, welcomed them to Toronto Botanical Garden, and confirmed the time the tour will take, you then cover the script for the entrance walkway.

In situations where there is a large group being shared among several tour guides you will have conferred with your colleagues to determine who takes which route with their group, to avoid overlaps along the way!

You then lead your group through the various gardens, judging your walking speed to fit that of the group. At the various stopping points you pause to ensure all are gathered around and can hear you speak.

It is a pleasant and leisurely stroll for one hour with this group. They show lots of

interest and provide much praise for what they see along the way. You ensure they see what is currently in bloom (and encourage them to visit again at different times of the year!). You judge the interest level of the group and impart some history of the building/gardens or more information on environmental practices along the way. A couple of people show particular interest in specific plants and you assist them locate the relevant plant labels to confirm ID.

It has been an enjoyable and absorbing hour; time has flown by! You end back where you started, reminding them of the Garden Shop and the book collection in the library that they can also see at their leisure if they wish. If we are collecting feedback you encourage them to provide this. You thank them for visiting TBG and encourage them to come back soon!

The group are all smiles and thanks. You say goodbye to them with the satisfaction that you have helped provide a welcoming and educational experience for a charming group of people.



## VOLUNTEER APPLICATION

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (Home) \_\_\_\_\_ (Business) \_\_\_\_\_

(cell) \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you currently a TBG Member? \_\_\_Yes \_\_\_ No

Car Licence Plate Number (if not currently a TBG member) \_\_\_\_\_

Note parking is free for volunteers (who are not members) for the first calendar year in which they commenced volunteering, after which time we sincerely hope volunteers will become TBG members!)

How did you hear about the Toronto Botanical Garden?

Your educational and/or work background:

Your previous volunteer experience:

Availability (please be very specific, giving days of week, times etc):

**I am interested in volunteering for the following:**

Please check as many as are applicable. However we would appreciate it if you could rate your level of interest, 1 being your first choice, 2 your second choice ... and so on.

Please note: training will be provided for all positions and before each big special event.

Some of our positions regular commitment (for example weekly shifts throughout the gardening season). Please refer to the website and the volunteer handbook for detailed role descriptions.

- Adult Programs (assisting with courses and lectures)
- Children's Programs (Summer Day Camps, Fall/Winter Programs, Special Events)
- Gardening (seasonal weekdays April to October)
- Garden Ambassador (seasonal weekends May to September)
- Garden Shop
- Library
- Reception
- Special Events
- Tour Guide (seasonal May to October)

Other:

Thank you for your interest in volunteering at the Toronto Botanical Garden.

We will contact you shortly to schedule a meeting/discuss next steps.

**PLEASE SUBMIT YOUR COMPLETED FORM TO:**

Toronto Botanical Garden, 777 Lawrence Avenue East, Toronto, ON M3C 1P2  
Attention: Volunteer Department  
tourguides@[torontobotanicalgarden.ca](mailto:tourguides@torontobotanicalgarden.ca)