

SAN DIEGO BOTANIC GARDEN

THE GARDEN

A newsletter for staff & volunteers



Greetings all! We are all looking forward to your return and are working hard to ensure your safety when you do. The coronavirus is still with us and we continue to adhere to county and state regulations; we are taking great care to have all safety protocols and efficient procedures in place.

We know that many of you are anxious to return, check out the Garden and see your friends. We also know it's been a difficult task to wait for our reopening! We thank you for your patience and understanding of the many considerations we have before us. This newsletter is offered to begin defining how our Volunteer Program will look when we are able to come back together.

Certainly, we won't yet be able to answer all questions but please know that this is an evolving situation and we will continue to keep you informed of our progress moving forward.

We have much work to be done at the Garden! We look forward to your return and your generous efforts to help us focus on what's best for the Garden in its new chapter.



A Phased Reopening for Volunteers:

We will be inviting volunteers back to the Garden using a phased approach. This stems from our strong efforts to abide by county safety guidelines and insurance requirements needed to maintain the safety and health of all in the Garden. To allow for proper distancing, we must limit the number of people at any one time. At the same time, we must also address current and pressing Garden needs.

Safety Precautions:

All volunteers will be required to follow the same protocols as the staff. Under State regulations during the coronavirus, volunteers are to be considered as staff with the same training and safety procedures. This includes wearing a face covering whenever within six feet of another person, social distancing and temperature checks.

Work Assignments:

You will notice that work assignments look a bit different than when you were last in the Garden. We have restructured most work assignments to fit within relevant guidelines while best meeting the needs of the Garden.

Volunteers will be signing up for all assignments before coming to the Garden to work. And when arriving at the Garden, volunteers will be checking in at varying locations with iPads. Staff and volunteers will be on hand to assist; it is a very easy process.

We have created staff-guided teams that will work on the prioritized needs of the Garden. Where you work may change week to week -- this is an opportune time to try something new!

To begin, we will be focusing on some much-needed assignments that were filled by already trained volunteers. These folks will be contacted by email and don't need to sign up for the time being. We'll be ramping up our Horticulture maintenance efforts with teams focusing on various areas of the Garden.

We are also placing a bright emphasis on Visitor Services. It is of the utmost importance that we elevate the visitor experience to help grow the Garden back to its previous financial stability. Assignments in Admissions and Conservatory & Garden Ambassadors (throughout the Garden) will be also be first on our phased reopening schedule.

Other assignments will be brought back as soon as reasonably possible. We ask your patience as we move through this process.

Volunteering Procedures

- Attend a training session (Zoom meeting) before returning to the Garden, to include:
 - Safety
 - Return-to-Work Guidelines with overview of a revised Volunteer Handbook (Handbook will then be emailed with return acknowledgement required)
 - Customer Service
 - Training schedules to come
- Sign up for all shifts
 - Advance email notice will be sent to all about when signups will be posted
 - Signups will be posted about one to two weeks before assignments
- Daily Procedures
 - Parking: Overflow lot for all except DFEC assignments and those with mobility issues. Entrance through back gate.
 - Temperature check
 - Safety: face coverings & social distancing
 - Sign in with Volgistics using iPads - assistance will be provided
 - Meet staff for assignments
 - Sign out with Volgistics



Phase 1 Assignments

- These are the first open shifts during this trial period
- More shifts to come
- Staff directed work
- Changing over time to meet Garden needs
- Advance signups

Initial Assignments: These are the ONLY shifts available to start. Others will follow as we pass through this experimental phase.

- Visitor Services
 - Admissions (at DFEConservatory)
 - Training required (even if previously trained -- we have new systems)
- Check in assistance for other volunteers -- (When checking in for your shift and can help others for the first few minutes, please let Jill know.)
 - Take temperature checks
 - Offer login help with Volgistics (training provided)
- Some specific jobs already filled by trained volunteers will be invited to continue. These volunteers will be contacted individually by email.
- Education
 - Conservatory and Garden Ambassadors
 - Training required



Q & As

- Why can't volunteers come back right away? Why is this taking so long?
 - There are many procedures we must consider to ensure safety, efficiency and address current needs of the Garden. It is a complex and important situation we face and we are committed to being thoughtful, thorough and responsible.
- When can we come back?
 - We are working hard to bring volunteers back as soon as reasonably possible. We will begin with limited assignments, expanding as we assess safety and work flow.
- Why can't we have our same old groups?
 - We are reshaping groups to make sure staff and volunteers' efforts are for the betterment of the Garden and its changing needs. There will still be groups of volunteers working together (at a distance) and they will be more mobile, moving about the Garden on any given day.
- Why do we have to login when we arrive?
 - It is important that we have an accurate and timely record of who is in the Garden and when. This relates to safety, insurance, emergencies and scheduling of shifts.
- You said that volunteer work will be 'staff guided.' What does that mean?
 - All work done in the Garden will be identified, structured and overseen by staff to ensure we are properly distancing while addressing the critical work most needed.
- Why do we have to park in the overflow lot when the main lot sits vacant?
 - With the current directional paths and roadways (to ensure proper distancing) we must minimize traffic interfering or impeding the unusual flow of visitors.

- It seems like you have completely changed the volunteers' work and experience. Why? We were doing what we really enjoyed.
 - Any changes to the volunteering activities in the Garden have been carefully considered in a difficult time, for the betterment of the Garden. The Garden has much work for our volunteers; we have developed procedures to make sure volunteers can safely return and help us all do the work that is ever changing.
- How will the training be given?
 - The training that all volunteers must attend prior to returning will be done via Zoom meeting. This will include safety, operating procedures (referencing a revised volunteer handbook) and customer service, Admissions, and Conservatory & Garden Ambassadors.
- Are any work assignments being canceled? Why?
 - We are currently evaluating all work that was previously being accomplished. While all of it was extremely helpful, we must meet requirements for safety, the visitor experience, and prioritizing areas and tasks throughout the Garden.
- Will there be new opportunities down the line?
 - Absolutely. As the Garden continues to thrive and regain speed after the closing, our departments will continue to reevaluate and develop new opportunities for a new time.
- When does the 'second phase' begin?
 - Similar to what we've seen through state and county efforts, that depends on how things progress. Of course, our main concern is the well being of all volunteers and staff. As long as that continues to progress positively, we can continue to move forward with opening up more assignments.

- Why do we have to sign up for assignments before doing work?
 - All volunteers in the Garden will have a specific work-related reason for being onsite to limit the number of people present and maximize productivity.
- What about all of my personal tools? Do I have to carry those to the Garden from the overflow lot?
 - Volunteers can bring hand tools like specific weeding implements and pruners; loppers and saws should be left at home. We will be revisiting tool sanitizing between plants (pruners) and soil borne pathogen spread (trowels, shovels) when onsite. Staff oversight includes ensuring all appropriate and necessary tools are on hand.
- When will all of these changes stop and we can go back to our normal routines?
 - Going forward, we will continue to refine and develop our volunteer program to best meet the needs of the Garden. Certainly, there will be changes and adjustments but we imagine many of the new procedures will stay with us for the foreseeable future. Our progress in reopening and the coronavirus will inform those decisions.
- What is Volgistics?
 - Volgistics is a volunteer management system which will allow us to better manage such things as logging in. Other features are coming in the near future, to include recording hours, signing up for assignments, tracking your contact information and your status, etc.
- Who decided to make all of these changes?
 - All management staff and department heads have collaborated closely to determine how best to reopen the Garden to meet it's changing needs and new safety protocols.

