Horticultural Assistant Job Description

Title: Horticultural Assistant

Pay Level & Current Wage: Commensurate with experience. Beta level ($10.20/hr.) for current students

Typical Length of Employment: _____ Academic Year ___X___Summer ______ Other

Number of Positions: 1

Department: Calvin Ecosystem Preserve & Native Gardens

Locations: Gardeners Cottage & Glasshouse, Lake Drive Greenhouse

Supervisor:
Native Garden Management: Jen Howell, Land Manager  jlh89@calvin.edu
Native Plant Propagation: Jeanette Henderson, Program Manager  jmh46@calvin.edu

Schedule: Up to 40 hours a week for 12 weeks with hours split evenly between native garden management and native plant propagation tasks. The majority of hours are scheduled during weekdays but some evening and Saturday work may be required on occasion.

Purpose of Position (Summary): To assist the preserve staff with the care and maintenance of the native plant demonstration gardens and propagation and cultivation of native plants for sale and restoration in projects in the preserve. This includes, but is not limited to: routine care (weeding, watering, etc.), removal of invasive plants, assisting with propagation and cultivation of 100+ native plant species, pest and disease monitoring and management, seed collection and processing, retail plant sales, record keeping and data entry, supervising volunteers, and keeping work spaces clean.

Primary Responsibilities:

Native Garden Management
• Keep the garden beds and demonstration areas groomed and tidy per the guidelines of the garden management plan. This includes weeding, removing leaves and debris, dead-heading flowers, cutting down grasses, staking draping plants, etc.
• Use hand tools and power equipment to prepare and amend soil and plant plugs and seeds into garden beds and restoration sites.
• Prune trees, shrubs, and vines in accordance with the garden management plan.
• Monitor and remove invasive species as needed.
• Check soil moisture, monitor irrigation system and hand water as needed.
• Monitor pests and diseases and follow appropriate Integrated Pest Management strategies to address issues including vertebrate pest management (deer, voles, rabbits, etc.).
• Assist with record keeping and data collection for the garden management plan.
• Work with and train volunteers in care and maintenance of the gardens and ensure their safety.
• Clean and maintain tools and equipment.
• Maintain compost bins.
• Alert Land Manager to structure maintenance issues.

Native Plant Propagation
• Propagate plants in greenhouses including sowing seeds, transplanting seedlings, weeding, watering and monitoring for pests and disease.
• Weed, water, organize and monitoring stock in the native plant enclosures and in glasshouse for pests and disease.
• Assist with seed collection, viability assessment, and storage.
• Learn how to identify native plants of the Great Lakes region as seedlings and as mature plants.
• Assist with record keeping and data collection for ongoing propagation and cultivation projects.
• Work with and train volunteers in plant propagation and seed collection techniques and ensure their safety.
• Assist with research and development of techniques to ensure high germination and growth rates for species as well as maintaining healthy plants.
• Assist with the management/operations of the greenhouse, glasshouse, and native plant nursery enclosures keeping the spaces cleaned and organized, stocked with supplies, and working properly.
• Assist with sale of nursery stock during the summer months.
• Develop outreach materials related to native plants, pollinators, and birds for the native plant sale and gardens.

General
• Assist visitors to the native gardens, Bunker Interpretive Center and the preserve by welcoming them and answering questions.
• Take photos and videos of native plants and their pollinators to be used for a variety of educational materials.
• Learn to follow proper safety protocols.
• Perform additional duties as requested.

Required Skills/Experience/Qualifications:
• Willingness, curiosity and an excitement to learn about native plants of the Great Lakes Region, plant propagation, gardening, land management, and the ecology and natural history of the flora and fauna of West Michigan.
• Ability to work both independently and collaboratively.
• Capacity to be a self-starter with the ability to take initiative and know when to ask for help.
• Attention to detail and effective follow-through on projects.
• Excellent/detailed oral and written communication skills.
• Competency in using Microsoft Office Suite and Google Apps.
• Prior experience working with hand and power tools (i.e. shovels, rakes, hand saws, pruners, loppers, hammers, string trimmers, leaf blowers, rototiller, lawn mowers, etc.)
• A valid driver’s license and the ability to drive automobiles on public roads and highways.
  • Being Calvin certified or be willing to obtain certification as a Calvin “Approved Driver” in order to use university vehicles.
• Passion for caring about God’s creation and commitment to the Ecosystem Preserve’s mission.

Preferred Skills/Experience/Qualifications:
• Commitment to working the entire 12 week schedule up to 40 hours per week.
• College-level coursework in botany, horticulture, plant taxonomy, plant physiology, environmental science, or previous work experience with native plants.
• Experience taking and editing photos for use in publications.
• Familiarity with horticultural practices, nursery operations, landscaping, and/or previous work in a greenhouse, or farm setting.
• Experience working with volunteers.

Physical Requirements: The Horticultural Assistant will work in greenhouses, general office setting, and outside in the native gardens and the preserve. Interns should be capable of rigorous outdoor work including lifting, digging, weeding, and sustained walking. They must also have tolerance for getting dirty, working in heated greenhouses and outdoors in a variety of weather conditions and exposure to biting insects, poison ivy, thorns, etc. The Horticultural Assistant needs to be able to lift at least 30 lbs.

Benefits:
• Gain valuable professional experience in the fields of horticultural botany, ecology, land management, greenhouse management, landscaping, interpretation, etc.
• Develop native and invasive plant identification skills.
• Learn more about native plant propagation and production, project management, volunteer management, display garden maintenance, event management, and public education and interpretation.
• Learn about scientific research, hands-on land management practices and environmental education at the preserve.
• Participate in the development of an expanding nursery and new public native gardens.
• Explore opportunities to network with professionals and attend field trips.
• Earn a great reference.
• Opportunity to work outdoors in a beautiful setting.

How to Apply: To apply for this position you must fill out an Ecosystem Preserve Student Employee Application online at www.calvin.edu/go/preserve (under Get Involved Section). Completed application and supporting documents including resume and 3 references may be submitted to:

Jen Howell, Land Manager, at jlh89@calvin.edu or hard copies of application materials can be placed in the mailbox outside of EI 114 Conference Room in the Bunker Interpretive Center.

Application Deadline: Review of applicants will begin on February 25 and will continue until the position is filled.