Volunteers

Our Most Valuable Resource

A Guide for Volunteers at the State Arboretum of Virginia

Foundation of the State Arboretum
At the University of Virginia’s Historic BLANDY EXPERIMENTAL FARM
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Introduction

Welcome to the State Arboretum of Virginia. Volunteer support at the State Arboretum is one of our most valuable resources. Each year, over 100 volunteers contribute more than 4,000 hours of their valuable time and talents to our gardens, trails, programs and committees. Without your skills, enthusiasm and dedication, the State Arboretum of Virginia would not be the thriving place it is today.

It is our sincere hope that you find volunteering here satisfying, the people friendly, and that you enjoy yourself whenever you are here. Thank you for giving your time and talents to the State Arboretum and Blandy Experimental Farm.

The volunteer program is organized by the Foundation of the State Arboretum (FOSA).
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History

Once a pre-Civil War plantation, Blandy Experimental Farm is not a farm in the traditional sense, but it offers fertile ground for environmental education and research. Instead of crops or livestock, Blandy comprises a 712-acre biological field station and the State Arboretum of Virginia.

The land occupied by Blandy in Clarke County, Virginia was once part of the adjoining Tuleyries estate built by Joseph Tuley, Jr., whose father purchased the property in 1806. The property had previously belonged to the Carter family, the landowners since 1730. Blandy’s history is evident in the Quarters, which was built in the 1830s and served as slave quarters for the adjoining plantation. The Quarters is listed on the state and national registers of historic places and now provides dormitory space for researchers working on the site, as well as offices, a library, kitchen, dining room, and more.

After the Civil War, the property was sold to Colonel Upton Boyce, for whom the town of Boyce is named and who helped establish the Shenandoah Valley Railroad. Graham F. Blandy, a wealthy New Yorker who made his fortune in the stock market, bought The Tuleyries in 1903 and made it his summer home. Upon his death in 1926, Blandy bequeathed 712 acres of his 910-acre estate to the University of Virginia for the express purpose of educating students about various farming and agricultural practices.

In 1927, Orland E. White, curator of plant breeding and economic plants at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, was hired as the first director of Blandy. During his 28-year tenure, Dr. White shaped Blandy into the place it is today, establishing the original 135-acre Arboretum as a tool for research and education. After his retirement in 1955, the University’s Board of Visitors named the Arboretum in his honor. In 1986 the Virginia General Assembly designated the Orland E. White Arboretum as the “State Arboretum of Virginia.”
Blandy Experimental Farm
Blandy Experimental Farm is a University of Virginia environmental research station managed through the University’s Department of Environmental Sciences. Within its 712 acres are habitats typical of the northern Shenandoah Valley such as farm fields, early succession fields, woodlots, and wetlands. At the center of the property is the 175-acre Orland E. White Arboretum, the State Arboretum of Virginia. Programs at Blandy include University research, PreK-12 school programs, and diverse programs for the general public.

Mission Statement
Blandy Experimental Farm exists to increase understanding of the natural world through education, research, and public outreach. Blandy provides research and learning opportunities to professional scientists, graduate students, undergraduates, PreK-12 students, and the general public. This mission guides both the development and the use of Blandy’s physical resources, including the Arboretum.

State Arboretum of Virginia
The State Arboretum of Virginia, also known as the Orland E. White Arboretum, exists to support the education, research and outreach missions of Blandy Experimental Farm and the University of Virginia.

Foundation of the State Arboretum
The Foundation of the State Arboretum of Virginia (FOSA) is the official fundraising, gift-receiving, and member organization created to support the mission of the State Arboretum of Virginia and Blandy Experimental Farm. FOSA is a 501(c)(3) university-related foundation.
Arboretum Collections
The Arboretum was established to provide a collection of trees and woody shrubs for education and research. Today the Arboretum encompasses 175 acres, with more than 5,500 recorded specimens representing more than 600 species in 180 genera. The Arboretum’s conifer collection is one of the most extensive in the country and the oak, maple and viburnum collections are also exceptional. The Arboretum features several specialty collections. These include the Nancy Larrick Crosby Native Plant Trail, the Herb Garden, the Boxwood Memorial Garden, the Ginkgo Grove, the Iris collection, the Daylily Garden, the Pollination Garden, and several other annual and perennial display gardens.

Facilities
The east wing of the Quarters was built circa 1830, and the University added the center and west wings in 1942. Staff and FOSA offices, the library, dining room, kitchen, public restrooms, computer room, volunteer room, and dormitory rooms for students are all located here.

Parkfield Learning Center, a former apple packing shed renovated in 1996, provides indoor classroom space for thousands of local school children who visit Blandy on field trips each year. Peetwood Pavilion provides outdoor classroom space and is available to the public when not in use for education programs. Information Pavilion near the parking lot offers information about the Arboretum and its programs.

Margaret B. Stimpson Amphitheater, just west of the Quarters, is used for concerts, weddings and events.

Picnic Grove east of the visitor parking lot is open to the public and offers picnic tables and a water fountain.

Greenhouses, laboratories and residences are not open to the public
Ready To Dig In?

*Volunteer Opportunities*

**Gardeners**

*(Last week of March through last week of October)* The State Arboretum of Virginia at Blandy Experimental Farm has many established perennial gardens, an herb garden, and a Native Plant Trail. Each area is maintained on a seasonal basis by an assistant curator and supporting volunteers. Tasks include planting, dividing, transplanting, fertilizing, weeding, mulching, and more. New volunteers are welcome to join at any time during the year. Please bring gloves, hat, water, and sunscreen; tools and training will be provided.

*Volunteers and staff meet in the main parking lot as follows:*

**Herb Garden** – Every Tuesday from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. during the growing season. Contact Carrie Whitacre at 540-837-1758 Ext. 289 or email carriewhitacre@virginia.edu

**Native Plant Trail** – Every Wednesday from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. during the gardening season. Contact Jack Monsted at 540-837-1758 Ext. 234 or email jm9ks@virginia.edu

**Perennial Gardens** – Every Thursday from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. during the gardening season. Contact Carrie Whitacre at 540-837-1758 Ext. 289 or email carriewhitacre@virginia.edu

**Community Garden** – Volunteer days and times are flexible.
Woody Collections Maintenance  
(Year Round)
Persons interested in assisting with the maintenance of the woody collections (shrubs, vines, small trees) are asked to email These work sessions are scheduled on a regular basis in the winter months and at other times as necessary. Maintenance activities include removal of invasive plant species, pruning and mulching of specimens, and labeling. Please bring gloves; tools and training will be provided. Contact Robin Cardillo at 540-837-1758 Ext.221 or email rcardillo@virginia.edu

Greenhouse Assistant
General greenhouse help includes watering, propagating and plant care. Qualifications for this position include an interest in plants and the physical ability to do the work. Bending and lifting (up to 50 lbs) are required. Hours will be scheduled to suit the volunteer, however, 2 to 4 hours one or two days per week would be helpful. Benefits: Able to take cuttings and seedlings with permission.

Library Aide
Assist with a variety of Library duties to include
- Shelving
- Filing library materials.
- Keeping records on items of circulation.
- Helping to inventory and catalog special collections such as slides and photographs.
- Organizing newsletter files.

Qualifications: Interest in periodicals, books and horticulture and the ability to maneuver and climb movable stairs. Time commitment will require 2 to 4 hours each week or two, to average at least 4 hours every 2 weeks. Time will be scheduled around events, programs and meetings held in the library.
Program Assistant

The State Arboretum of Virginia offers a wide array of public programs throughout the year. For most programs one or more volunteers are needed to assist with the many tasks associated with these programs. Program assistant responsibilities vary depending on the type of program. Benefits: Can attend programs at no charge.

The program assistant may be asked to:

- Arrive early to help set up.
- Make coffee or prepare refreshments.
- Check with program presenter to determine whether he/she needs assistance before, during or after program.
- Use registration list to check in participants and collect registration fees if applicable.
- Hand out literature, information packets or other materials.
- Assist with cleanup and other tasks after program.
Youth Education Assistant

(Only during the School Year)
The Arboretum offers a wide variety of educational programs to students in grades pre-K through high school. Volunteers will work with a program presenter, helping to prepare and assist in leading activities. There are indoor and outdoor activities. Time commitment usually involves 3 to 4 hours at a time, between the hours of 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. A willingness to work with children is required. A background and/or education in Virginia’s natural environment is beneficial.

Special Events
Special Events Volunteers help with pre-event planning, set up, event day activities and cleanup. The State Arboretum relies greatly on its volunteers, especially during the larger, annual events (Garden Fair) and other events. As a special events volunteer, you will be called upon to work at least a 3-hour shift for both of these events in one of the following areas: set up, vendor check-in, gatekeepers, wagon control, membership, children’s activities, volunteer meals, plant sales. If you are interested in the actual planning of events, please talk to the Volunteer Coordinator.

Arboretum Docents
Volunteer Docents give tours and programs, greet visitors and assist with related activities. Contact Robin Cardillo at 540-837-1758 Ext. 221 or via email at rcardillo@virginia.edu
Bridle Trail
Volunteers clear new trails, install signage and maintain trails as needed. They may serve as trail guides for FOSA sponsored rides. Members also prepare mailings for other horse related activities and then act as host/hostess and registrar for these events.

Holiday Workshops
Wreath making and flower arranging workshops are held on several Saturdays in December. Volunteers help with greens collections, publicity, setup and cleanup. They are also needed to assist the instructor during workshops.

Event Site Prep
Volunteers set up tents, tables and chairs, post signage and lay out vendor exhibitor booths for special events, public programs, outdoor lectures, etc. Volunteers also help with takedown after the events.
Volunteer Expectations

- Read and understand the volunteer handbook and follow the procedures therein.
- Safety is a primary concern for all Blandy and Foundation volunteers. All volunteers shall act in a safe and responsible manner not only for personal safety, but also to protect others.
- The Foundation of the State Arboretum may request a volunteer to submit to drug and/or alcohol testing if there is reasonable cause.
- Record your volunteer hours on the computer in the volunteer room. Volunteers are asked to record the total number of hours worked to the closest quarter hour. It is best to record your hours right after you have finished volunteering for the day. These records are very important to us for volunteer recognition, grant writing and funding requests.

- Volunteers who are ill or for any reason cannot work as expected should call/email the appropriate staff member or the Volunteer Coordinator before their expected arrival.
- Please report any change of address, phone number or email address to the Volunteer Coordinator. This will ensure you receive all pertinent communications.
- If, as a volunteer, you are conducting Arboretum business off site, please inform the appropriate staff member or Robin Cardillo of your plans prior to conducting that business.
Safety Procedures

The safety of our volunteers is of the utmost importance to us. Following good safety procedures is the best method for preventing accidents and injury. If you observe a condition which you feel is unsafe, please notify a staff member or the Volunteer Coordinator immediately.

- For serious injuries or incidents or when you are unsure, call 911.
- All accidents and injuries must be reported to your staff supervisor, regardless of how small or insignificant they may seem.
- First Aid Kits are located in the main office, behind the door in the kitchen, in the learning center, the greenhouse, the lab, the grounds truck and on all four gators.

Staff Volunteer Supervisors

Carrie Whitacre  
Assistant Curator Herbaceous Gardens  
540-837-1758 Ext. 289  
carriewhitacre@virginia.edu

Jack Monsted  
Assistant Curator Native Plant Trail  
540-837-1758 Ext. 234  
jm9ks@virginia.edu

Emily Ford  
Lead Environmental Educator  
540-837-1758 Ext. 290  
emilyford@virginia.edu
Volunteer Benefits

- Receive 20 percent off annual/life membership to the Foundation of the State Arboretum with at least 40 volunteer hours logged each year.

- Volunteer at Garden Fair and get in free of charge.

- Annual Awards and Appreciation Dinner

- As a result of volunteer work at the State Arboretum, many volunteers experience personal benefits that include:

  - A new sense of community
  - Learning new skills and sharing talents
  - Meeting people and making friends
  - Giving back to the community

Affiliated Organizations

Blandy Experimental Farm is pleased to be community partners with organizations whose passion, purpose and activities reflect our mission and goals. The organizations affiliated with Blandy are:

American Boxwood Society
Northern Shenandoah Valley Audubon Society
Virginia Native Plant Society
Northern Shenandoah Valley Master Gardeners
Virginia Master Naturalists, Shenandoah Chapter
Piedmont/Blue Ridge Horticultural Society
Virginia Department of Forestry
Blandy/University of Virginia Alumni Club
Reflections From Our Volunteers…

“My wife and I have volunteered at Blandy for the past 16 years. Looking back over that time, we think the camaraderie with other volunteers and staff is the main reason we have stayed so long. However, we must say, the physical beauty of the grounds continues to bring us back, in addition to the knowledge we have learned and the job training we have received which has kept us interested.”

“I always feel appreciated! The staff at Blandy always expresses their appreciation for what we do as volunteers.”

“My time at Blandy, as one of the many garden volunteers, has been a real pleasure! Not only do you see the beauty of the gardens, but you also learn from the other volunteers.”

“Once my children were in school, I finally had time to get out of the house and do something for myself. I have always liked gardening and being outdoors, so one day, after walking at Blandy, I stopped by the office and asked about volunteering. I spoke with the Volunteer Coordinator and began volunteering in the perennial garden the next week! I come when I can and the staff is always happy to see me. My volunteer time at Blandy is a great ‘getaway!’”
Annual Events And Programs

Garden Fair
A Gardening Extravaganza! Mother’s Day Weekend

Holiday Workshops
The Arboretum’s Longest Running Public Program
December

Lectures and Workshops
Check our website!

Summer Nature Camp
1st - 8th Grades

For more information, visit our website at blandy.virginia.edu or call us at 540-837-1758 Ext. 0