

# Volunteer Manual



## Table of Contents

<b>Welcome.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Section 1: About The Gardens on Spring Creek.....</b>	<b>3-5</b>
Vision.....	4
Mission.....	4
Funding.....	4
History.....	5
General Information.....	5
<b>Section 2: Volunteering at The Gardens.....</b>	<b>6-13</b>
Volunteer Philosophy.....	6
Volunteer Involvement .....	6-8
<i>Volunteer Roles</i>	
<i>How to Become a Volunteer</i>	
Communication with Volunteers .....	8
Volunteer Benefits.....	8
Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities.....	8-9
Volunteer Guidelines .....	9-11
<i>Volunteer Application</i>	
<i>Logging Volunteer Hours</i>	
<i>Volunteer Identification</i>	
<i>Volunteer Inactivity</i>	
<i>Volunteer Opportunities</i>	
<i>Dressing for The Gardens</i>	
<i>Language</i>	
<i>Alcohol and Drug Use</i>	
<i>Harassment</i>	
<i>Restrictions on Political Activity</i>	
<i>City Equipment</i>	
Engage – Online Volunteer Database.....	12
Other Information.....	12-13
<i>Safety and Injuries</i>	
<i>Affirmative Action Statement</i>	
<i>Media</i>	
<i>Parking</i>	
<i>Working with Youth</i>	

## Welcome to The Gardens on Spring Creek!

We are pleased you have decided to grow along with us. Volunteers are a valued and critical component of our success at The Gardens. Volunteers are invaluable as we undertake horticultural, fundraising, educational and administrative projects. In turn, we hope to help volunteers reach their personal and professional goals through diverse opportunities for learning and participation.

This handbook is designed to introduce you to The Gardens and provide you with valuable information that will assist and guide you as a volunteer. Please be sure to read it thoroughly.

If you have questions about the information presented here or desire additional information, please email Hannah Krikorian at [hkrikorian@fcgov.com](mailto:hkrikorian@fcgov.com) or call (970) 416-2482.

Since the Gardens on Spring Creek is a City of Fort Collins facility, you are also a City of Fort Collins volunteer. Please read through the City's Volunteer Handbook at <https://www.fcgov.com/volunteer/files/volunteer-handbook.pdf>

We look forward to working with you and hope you have an enjoyable and rewarding experience!



## **Section One: About The Gardens on Spring Creek**

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### **Our Vision:**

To be a world-class botanic garden that is community oriented, educational, experiential and sustainable.

### **Our Mission:**

To enrich the lives of people and foster environmental stewardship through horticulture.

We are dedicated to the following values:

- Cultivating community through a passion for horticulture
- Honoring our local place, both the natural and human environments
- Demonstrating respect and compassion for all people
- Serving the northern Colorado community through public involvement and partnerships
- Providing exceptional service with enthusiasm, creativity, and cost-effectiveness

### **Funding for The Gardens on Spring Creek:**

Although a city-owned and operated facility, The Gardens has partnerships with two organizations for its operations.

The Friends of the Gardens on Spring Creek is the first non-profit 501(c)(3) partner of The Gardens. The Friends mission is to cultivate a world class botanic garden through fundraising and advocacy. The Friends has been instrumental in helping to raise funds for capital expansion projects and operations of The Gardens. The Friends Board of Directors consists of volunteers representing many sectors of our community.

The second partnership is with Butterfly Pavilion, a nonprofit organization based in Westminster, Colorado. Butterfly Pavilion staff reside at The Gardens and manage all butterfly operations of the Butterfly House. Gardens staff manage horticulture operations within the house. The Gardens pays Butterfly Pavilion for these services.

The Gardens raises over 60% of its budget through earned and contributed revenue from admissions, memberships, education programs, rentals, events, donations and other sources. The remaining budget is from the City of Fort Collins.



## **History of The Gardens:**

The Gardens on Spring Creek is located at 2145 Centre Avenue, half of a mile south of the Hilton which is located at the intersection of Centre and Prospect. The site comprises 18 acres (12 developed) on the west side of Centre Avenue, including a portion of the Spring Creek corridor – the busiest section of trail within the city. The Sherwood Lateral irrigation ditch runs through the site and was re-routed to accommodate the design of the project. Most of the site is within the Spring Creek floodplain, with the exception of the southern three acres where the building is located.

A full description of each garden can be found at [www.fcgov.com/gardens/our-gardens](http://www.fcgov.com/gardens/our-gardens).

## **General Information:**

### ***Public Hours***

The Gardens is open to the public year-round Monday through Sunday, from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and last paid entry is 1 hr before closing.

From June 1 through Labor Day, The Gardens is open Wednesdays until 8 p.m.  
December 1 through February 28th, The Gardens Winter Hours are 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

### ***Admission***

Daily admission rates to the Gardens:

- Adult (18+): \$11
- Senior (65+) / Military: \$9.00
- Child (2 - 17) / Student w/ID: \$8.00

As always, Members get in free!

### ***Telephone numbers***

- The Gardens main number - (970) 416-2486
- Volunteer Coordinator - (970) 416-2482



## Section Two: Volunteering at The Gardens

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### **Volunteer Philosophy:**

The Gardens on Spring Creek's mission, vision, and values are a guide for its volunteer program. It helps leadership, Friends, and staff accomplish the goals we have for our Northern Colorado botanic garden. Volunteers serve in many roles, and they do it well. Volunteers can best meet our needs by helping us serve more people and make a greater impact.

*Volunteer Purpose Statement:* The Purpose of The Gardens on Spring Creek Volunteer Program is to enrich lives of volunteers and community members through our beautiful, curated gardens and outstanding education programs and events; create a financially sustainable workforce; and educate volunteers and guests about environmental stewardship through gardening.

### **Volunteer Involvement at The Gardens:**

Volunteers give their time and talents in a variety of settings and volunteer positions throughout The Gardens. The opportunities are varied and do not require prior knowledge of plants, horticulture, or science. The Gardens on Spring Creek has had a volunteer program since its inception in 2004.

### **Volunteer Roles:**

**Administrative:** Volunteers help with a variety of tasks such as data entry, answering phones, guest services, grant writing, and editing. Guest Services volunteers must have good customer service skills and computer skills. A background check is required for volunteers that work with cash.

**Adult Programs:** Includes education opportunities for volunteers such as introducing adult classes, teaching classes if you have a particular area of expertise and assisting with cooking classes. Volunteers must be willing to engage with the public. Volunteers introducing classes need to have some public speaking skills.

**Butterfly House:** Guide guests into the Butterfly House! Help maintain our USDA guidelines while interacting with the public. Additional training is required.

**Gardening:** Horticulture staff hosts volunteer groups for social gardening on different days of the week throughout the growing season. Gardening tasks include weeding, transplanting, seeding, mulching, turning soil, deadheading as well as harvesting fruits and vegetables. This opportunity requires a moderate



activity level and a willingness to work outside under varying conditions. Some adaptations can be made. Please be sure to wear closed-toe shoes.

**Greenhouse:** Work with a horticulturist to seed, transplant and water plants for our annual Plant Sale and to be planted in our gardens. Because of the size of our greenhouse and the number of volunteers that are interested in working in the greenhouse, there are limited opportunities available. Dates and times vary.

**Outreach:** Volunteers help staff information booths and lead activities at outreach events. Some past events include the High Plains Landscape Workshop, Earth Day Fort Collins, Bike to Work Day, Fort Collins Nursery Open House, Landscaping with Colorado Native Plants Conference and corporate giving fairs. Note: these opportunities have been limited due to the pandemic.

**Property Maintenance:** Occasionally we have jobs that require a handyperson such as general repairs, tool upkeep, pond maintenance, and fence work are a few examples of past property maintenance jobs. These jobs vary depending on The Gardens' needs. Volunteer must have tool knowledge and safety training.

**Special Events:** All our special events raise money for Gardens operations. There are many opportunities to help with our special events throughout the year including prep work beforehand, event set-up, day of event opportunities such as ticket scanning, crowd control, customer service, and staffing activity stations to name a few. Most opportunities require standing and walking around the event.

**Youth Programs:** If you like to work with children, we have many opportunities available. We host a variety of activities for children up to 11 years old: pre-k programming, camps, school tours, birthday parties, and informal activities in the Discovery Zone. Training is provided. Must love children and be flexible. A background check required for this position.

**To become a volunteer, several conditions must be met:**

- Volunteers must be at least 15 years old to work without supervision
- Volunteer application must be filled out through our online volunteer platform, Engage and you must sign a waiver online.
- Attend a volunteer orientation
- Volunteers who have met the above conditions, but are younger than 15, must be accompanied by a parent or a legal guardian for their service hours or qualify for our teen volunteer program assisting with summer camp programming.

All volunteers will be given training or shown how to do a task. An example is planting. Most staff members are horticulturists, and we have a preferred method for planting. All planting projects will start with a brief planting demonstration to ensure that everyone is planting the right way.

We have over 400 active volunteers at the Gardens on Spring Creek. It is physically impossible for staff to work every moment side by side, given the number of volunteers. All staff members have a variety of responsibilities, and while we would love to spend more time with volunteers, current schedules may not permit it. There may be periods of time that volunteers are shown a task by a staff member and then are left unattended.

### **Communication with Volunteers:**

If you ever have questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the volunteer coordinator, Hannah Krikorian – [hkrikorian@fcgov.com](mailto:hkrikorian@fcgov.com) or call (970) 416-2482.

Volunteer newsletters will be sent out at least twice per month during the busy season. The newsletter will feature what's new in the volunteer program as well as all the available volunteer opportunities.

### **Volunteer Benefits:**

There are several unique benefits in being a volunteer at The Gardens on Spring Creek including:

- Giving back to the community by helping maintain and develop a beautiful facility
- Participate in training and educational opportunities
- Receive help in reaching personal and professional goals
- Network with staff and community members
- Increase horticulture knowledge by working with garden staff on outdoor garden maintenance or greenhouse projects
- Increase leadership ability
- Increase self-confidence by completing tasks
- Develop lasting friendships
- Gain new skills
- Receive community recognition through our website and/or newsletter
- Attend volunteer-only appreciation events
- Hear good news from clients, vendors, or patrons about the Gardens on Spring Creek itself or relevant to specific programs or projects. The good work of volunteers is noticed not only by staff but by the visiting public as well!
- Volunteers who are 55 or older have the opportunity to become an RSVP volunteer through Volunteers of America; RSVP volunteers are eligible for certain benefits including supplemental insurance.

### **Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities:**

**Volunteer staff has the right to:**

- Have rewarding, suitable jobs with clear expectations, and support.
- Be provided with orientation, training, support, supervision, and evaluation.
- Be trusted and respected by staff.



- Be appropriately recognized for effort.

**Volunteer staff has the responsibility to:**

- Participate in orientation, training programs, and program evaluations.
- Learn about The Gardens on Spring Creek's policies, programs, and people.
- Accept and complete assignments that they sign up for.
- Notify staff in a timely manner in the event they cannot come in on their agreed upon project date.
- Treat visitors with courtesy and respect.
- Uphold policies of The Gardens on Spring Creek.
- Inform supervisor of any program concerns or activities.
- Inform supervisor of any media interviews (newspaper, radio, or TV), press releases, or Internet use where you will be representing (or mentioning) the Gardens on Spring Creek.
- Identify yourself as a volunteer with a badge or other items.
- Act in a professional manner, which includes respecting confidences.
- Be accountable to and supportive of the work at The Gardens on Spring Creek.
- Abstain from drinking alcohol while on duty.

**Volunteer Guidelines:****Volunteer Application**

All volunteers are required to complete and sign a volunteer application prior to being accepted as a volunteer for the Gardens on Spring Creek. Our online application is located at [www.fcgov.com/gardens/volunteer](http://www.fcgov.com/gardens/volunteer).

**Logging Volunteer Hours**

Volunteers are asked to log their hours in Engage. To do this, ensure you are signing in and out for your shifts using the tablet in our 'volunteer center' in the back room of the Visitor Center. All volunteer hours contribute to the success of the Gardens on Spring Creek. Volunteer hours also are important in the grant application process. By tracking volunteer hours, we can report how well supported The Gardens are on a yearly basis. For simplicity, volunteer time is rounded to the nearest 15 minutes. If you have a problem, please contact the volunteer coordinator.

**Volunteer Identification**

Our 'volunteer center' is in the back room of the Visitor Center. There you will check in (and out) for your shift, find your nametag, and be able to store your belongings if needed. When you arrive for a shift, please check in on the tablet and pick up a name tag from the board and wear it to identify yourself as a Garden on Spring Creek volunteer. Please leave your nametag at The Gardens, as they are expensive to replace if lost.

**Volunteer Inactivity**

All Gardens volunteers will remain active in our database as long as they volunteer at

least once within a two-year period. After two years of inactivity, volunteers will be marked as inactive. If a volunteer would like to resume volunteering again, they will need to complete a new volunteer application, attend an orientation, and volunteer interview.

### **Volunteer Opportunities**

All volunteer opportunities will be posted to Engage and shared via a bi-monthly volunteer e-newsletter and/or subsequent email follow-ups. To volunteer, log into Engage to sign up.

### **Dressing for The Gardens**

The Gardens is a public facility. As such, your attire and how you represent yourself reflects on the Gardens at Spring Creek. Refer to the following list regarding appropriate attire:

- Acceptable pants include jeans, khaki pants, work pants, outdoor hiking/camping pants, skirts, and longer shorts (no short-shorts).
- Clothing, face masks, hats, or jewelry that depict alcohol, drugs, tobacco, violence, gangs, profanity, support for a political candidate or other topics that would likely negatively reflect on the positive reputation of The Gardens are not permitted.
- Wear shoes appropriate for the task. If you are working outdoors, closed-toe shoes are required. Shoes, such as flip flops or sandals are not acceptable as they offer no protection from shovels, mulch, or prickly plants. We will not be able to let you stay for your volunteer shift if you are not wearing close toed shoes.
- All undergarments must be covered by clothing.
- New volunteers may be surprised to find that in the winter it can be surprisingly warm in the greenhouse, especially midday when it is sunny outside. However, on cloudy days, it can be both cool and humid. The best approach is to dress in layers so you can adjust to the greenhouse temperature. Note: there are lockers available in the back room that are labeled 'volunteer' where you can store a jacket or extra shirt, but please take your extra clothing home at the end of your shift.
- If you are helping with outdoor garden maintenance, please dress for the weather and outdoor work. Long pants offer the best leg protection during planting projects. In summer, dress in lightweight work clothes. All outdoor volunteers must wear closed-toe shoes.
- When working with youth programming, please wear clothing that is appropriate for romping around the garden and working with children. This includes clothing that allows you to move easily, play games, sit on the ground if able, and get dirty. All youth programs have outside components so please dress appropriately for the weather.
- Gloves are helpful in doing many tasks around the greenhouse and outside in the gardens, and if you are spending a substantial amount of time gardening you should invest in a good pair of leather or gardening gloves. Of course, if you forget yours at home, you are welcome to borrow a pair from us.

**\*If you are wearing inappropriate or offensive attire, Gardens staff will send you home to change clothing.**

### **Language**

- Use respectful language
- Profanity, sexual jokes, and innuendoes are prohibited
- “Put downs”, gender, ethnic, religious, and racial slurs or demeaning others will not be tolerated

### **Alcohol and Drug Use**

The Gardens on Spring Creek is a drug-free workplace. We have a zero tolerance of illegal drugs or intoxication of any sort. Volunteers who show up for work under the influence of drugs or alcohol will be sent home. If this offense is repeated, you will no longer be allowed back to the Gardens on Spring Creek as a volunteer.

### **Harassment is prohibited**

The City of Fort Collins and The Gardens are committed to providing an environment that is free of harassment and unlawful discrimination. Consistent with the City’s respect for the rights and dignity of each employee, harassment based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation or any other characteristic protected by law, will not be tolerated.

Harassing conduct includes, but is not limited to: epithets, slurs, or negative stereotyping; threatening, intimidating or hostile acts; and written or graphic material that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual or group and that is placed on walls or elsewhere on City premises or circulated in the workplace. The Gardens has zero tolerance for harassing or demeaning behavior.

### **Restrictions on Political Activity**

The City recognizes that employees and volunteers have rights and responsibilities as residents to participate in the political process. However, because City employees and volunteers hold positions of public trust and confidence, certain restrictions on political activities of volunteers during their shift are required. Please refrain from wearing political clothing of any sort promoting a specific candidate.

### **City Equipment**

As a volunteer there are certain restricted activities.

- Volunteers are not allowed to drive City vehicles
- Volunteers younger than 16 are not permitted to use power tools (this includes battery, gas, or electric powered devices)
- Volunteers who are at least 16 years old or older are not allowed to use power tools (this includes battery, gas, or electric powered devices) unless they have been shown how to properly operate said device by a member of staff and have successfully passed a background check.

## **Engage - Online Volunteer Database:**

Engage is the volunteer management software that we use to schedule and track volunteers. Volunteers may access the software through an online portal. Access to our portal, is on our website at [www.fcgov.com/gardens/volunteer](http://www.fcgov.com/gardens/volunteer). Scroll down and click on “**Current Volunteers log in here**”.

Once logged in, volunteers can:

- View and manage their schedule
- Sign-up for vacant schedule openings
- Print your schedule
- Keep personal information up-to-date
- Post hours
- Check your service records, and print your own service reports
- Change Engage password
- Opt-in or out of text messaging and update message preferences

For more information on how to use Engage visit: [www.fcgov.com/volunteer/engage-help-guides](http://www.fcgov.com/volunteer/engage-help-guides).

## **Other Information:**

### **Safety and Injuries**

Safety is a high priority at The Gardens. Any potential hazards such as uncoiled hoses, tools lying about, chemicals, wet floors, etc. should be dealt with immediately to avoid an accident. Please talk with a staff person as this is a concern for volunteers’ and visitors’ safety.

Report any injuries at The Gardens to the staff immediately. Accident reports must be completed to meet City of Fort Collins requirements. Your insurance may be in jeopardy if you fail to inform us about any injury. A first aid kit is in the staff office area by the door to the lobby. Please notify a staff person if you are injured and need something from the first aid kit. **NOTE: we cannot dispense medications to the public but can provide them with band-aids or icepacks.**

### **Affirmative Action Statement**

Applications for volunteer positions are considered without regard to race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, disability, sexual orientation and other characteristics protected by law.

### **Media**

We can expect that The Gardens will be frequently called by reporters and editors seeking information for news and feature stories. These stories often appear in newspapers and magazines or are broadcast on radio or television. It is essential that

all media contact be coordinated through The Gardens staff. They will be able to provide background material and will schedule follow-up interviews with the most appropriate Gardens representatives at that time.

### **Parking**

The Gardens makes every effort to provide and maintain parking that is convenient, clean and safe. Volunteers, employees, and visitors using this parking assume the risk of property damage or theft as The Gardens disclaims responsibility.

There will be times during special events that we may need to ask volunteers along with staff to park along Botanical Lane on the south side of The Gardens.

### **Working with Youth**

Child safety is of upmost importance in our programs here at The Gardens. Whether visiting with a school, here with their parents or under our supervision during camp, we must be aware of the emotional and physical safety of our students. During school programs, teachers are the go-to for all first aid, safety and behavioral concerns. However, during camp, the Education Coordinator acts as the responsible party when it comes to making decisions for the students' best interest. All significant concerns must be brought to their attention.



**Thank you** for volunteering at the Gardens on Spring Creek and for giving back to the Northern Colorado community! The Gardens would not exist without volunteers and the contributions they make to continue making Fort Collins a great place to live and visit.