



Volunteer Frequently Asked Questions About Volunteering

Thank you for your interest in volunteering with us! Below are some of our FAQs about volunteering. Generally, volunteers need to arrange their time with us, sign a waiver, record their time, follow garden rules, and have fun helping their community. Please contact us to schedule and to ask any questions not answered here! Info@sharkgarden.org

1. How do I become a volunteer?

The first step is to contact us and let us know what you have in mind. One of our board members will help you pick a time when we can be there to facilitate your volunteer time. They will talk with you about what projects currently need work and what is involved. Contact us via email or Facebook to get started. Write to: Info@sharkgarden.org or message us @theSharkGarden on Facebook. **Read the rest of these FAQs first and we'll get you signed up.**

2. How do I arrange for a group to volunteer?

The first step is to contact us and let us know what you have in mind. One or more of our board members will help you pick a time when we can be there to facilitate your volunteer day. They will talk with you about what projects currently need work and what is involved. Contact us via email or Facebook to get started. Write to: Info@sharkgarden.org or message us @theSharkGarden on Facebook. **Read the Group Volunteering FAQs on our website for a lot more information about volunteering in groups.**

3. What do volunteers do in the garden?

Most volunteers work on maintaining the garden's common areas, like the pathways. This involves some weeding and then often covering areas with wood chips from our big piles. Depending on the skill of a volunteer, volunteers might also help with planting or harvesting crops for the food bank, building a construction project of some kind, watering beds, planting plants, weeding beds, tending perennial beds, moving compost or soil, and more. If you have a project idea, let us know! We also have some "less dirty" tasks available at some times of year.

4. How do I record my volunteer hours? Why should I?

We will provide you with a volunteer sign in sheet. This also has our volunteer waiver on it. Tracking our volunteer hours helps us get more funding for the garden!

5. Are there regular volunteer work parties I can join?

Yes, during the main growing season, we have work parties on the first Saturday of the month from 10am – noon. This is usually from March through October. You can just show up to these and introduce yourself to the board member in charge to get started. Please check on our Facebook feed for other events and contact us with any questions about other work party days.

6. Can anyone volunteer? Are there age restrictions?

We welcome all volunteers to the garden, but we do have a Youth Volunteer Policy that describes a required adult to kids ratio (1:5) and what tools kids are allowed to use. The other consideration is for anyone who might have difficulty walking. Many parts of the garden have uneven ground or soft surfaces, so keep this in mind in terms of accessibility and safety.

7. Can I do my court ordered community service hours in the garden?

In some cases, yes. The garden is on school property, so we can only take certain types of community service volunteers without violent or sexual offences. We have a board member who coordinates community service volunteers, so we'll put you in touch with her.

8. Can I do my Eagle Scout project in the garden?

Yes, probably. We have several preapproved projects ready to go for Eagle Scouts looking for one! If you are interested in a project other than those, talk to us and we'll see if it fits in with our plans for the garden. All projects need to be approved by our board, so please allow time for that process. The day(s) for implementation/installation of your project will also need to be scheduled with the garden board. Contact us for more information.

9. Can I do volunteer hours for my school in the garden?

Yes, as long as it can be done at a time that one of our board members can be there to coordinate with you and show you the ropes. Contact us to learn more and check out our Youth Volunteer Policy.

10. What should I wear to volunteer?

Volunteers should bring their own gloves, water bottle or drinks, and sunscreen. Shoes should have closed toes for safety. Boots are recommended during the wet season. Rain jackets or appropriate layers of clothes for the season are good to have. A hat is recommended for the sunny season and you may want sunglasses. There is not much shade in the garden, so keep that in mind. If you are doing a construction project, talk to us about safety gear and special tools that might be involved.

11. What should I bring with me?

Volunteers should bring their own gloves, water bottle or drinks, and sunscreen. If you have favorite hand tools, bring those too. We have limited supplies of small hand tools like pruners or hand trowels. We have most of the big hand tools like shovels, rakes, and wheelbarrows. There is not much shade in the garden, so keep that in mind. If you are doing a construction project, talk to us about safety gear and special tools that might be involved. Please leave as many of your valuables at home as you can or lock them in your car out of sight. Leave your pets at home. If your children are coming with you, please keep them close at hand and out of the beds.

12. Do I need to bring my own tools when I volunteer?

Volunteers should bring their own gloves, hat, water bottle or drinks, and sunscreen. If you have favorite hand tools, bring those too. We have limited supplies of small hand tools like pruners or hand trowels. We have most of the big hand tools like shovels, rakes, and wheelbarrows. Please be sure to clean them off when you are done using them and put them away.

13. Are there bathrooms or covered areas?

Nope. There is a little shade created by our trees, but there is not a permanent covered area all year round. There are bathrooms at Safeway on 128th and a porta potty might be rented for large events in the garden or volunteer groups. Please plan accordingly.

14. Can I bring my dog along to volunteer or visit the garden?

Nope, we're afraid not. As much as we all love dogs, the garden is for food production and pet waste can spread disease. Unfortunately, too many people were letting their dogs enter garden beds and run off leash, so we had to prohibit pets all together. Service animals that were trained to help a person with specific tasks are allowed by law and must remain on leash.

15. How do I know what tasks need doing?

On your first volunteer day, one of our board members will be there to explain things. If you want to become a regular volunteer with us, we will show you where garden tasks are posted and you can choose something from that list that we will try to keep updated.

16. Can I volunteer in a way that doesn't get my hands dirty?

If you want to volunteer with us in a way that is less labor intensive, let us know! We have lots of “less dirty” things that need doing to support the growth of the garden. Many of those tasks are best for small groups or individuals and we’re open to ideas. Want to help fundraise or “friendraise”, create art, take photos or videos, be a guest speaker, start seedlings, write plant tags, create garden lesson plans, help with outreach? There’s lots of way to support us! Contact us to talk more about your interests and skills! We have a whole document listing ways that people can volunteer from home.

17. I want to volunteer directly with the students in the New Start High School. How do I do that?

We can help connect you with the teachers and staff at the high school and we welcome any volunteers who would like to help garden related lessons for our students. We are also keen to have any volunteer speakers who can talk about environmental science, nutrition, organic gardening, and food systems in our community. These speakers could be for the students or the public. We have a classroom space available for presentations, in some cases (more so during the school year).

18. What volunteer tasks are needed most?

Usually, watering is the thing we need the most help with in summer. Second is keeping the beds and paths weeded and covered with wood chips. Third helping plant, maintain, and harvest produce in the school garden portion of the garden. This produce is used by students and the surplus it taken to the White Center Food Bank by volunteers. Then, if you have super gardening skills, we can always use help maintaining our perennial beds, orchard, and compost systems. If you’re a plant nerd, let us know! We also need guest speakers!

19. Is it true that volunteers get to take home some produce?

Yes, if you are a regular volunteer with us and you’d like to take home a little produce after you finish for the day, you are welcome to. We can help explain how this works when you join us. Some areas are just for our students and volunteers, while other areas of the garden are for our p-patch renters.

20. Where can I find the garden rules and code of conduct?

They are posted on the two big signs by the southern entrances to the garden. The emergency numbers are also there. Please contact us if you have any concerns.