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Volunteer at Metro's Native Plant Center

Metro's Native Plant Center, located near Wanker's Corner in Tualatin, provides an important supply of uncommon, locally-adapted native seeds, bulbs and plant stock to support Metro's natural area restoration projects. At the center, staff and volunteers gather, grow and distribute native species for planting at Metro's restoration sites throughout the region.



Why a native plant center?

Most of Metro's 12,000-plus acres of natural areas and parks require active and ongoing restoration efforts to enhance habitat diversity and maintain native flora and fauna communities. Metro's restoration work enhances rare habitat types that once thrived throughout the Willamette Valley. The Native Plant Center provides hand-collected seed from local sources for enhancing natural areas with native plant materials that are not commercially available. At the plant center, 100 percent of the seeds produced are harvested and used for local restoration projects.

Volunteers find fertile ground

Through their contributions at the plant center, volunteers help produce a rich diversity of grasses, sedges, rushes and herbaceous plants for Metro's natural areas. Volunteering at the center is a great way to discover how to propagate local native plants, amplify seeds, appreciate the role of individual plant species in healthy habitats, and support local restoration efforts.

Volunteer opportunities exist year round at Metro's Native Plant Center – from organized Saturday public work parties and employee-sponsored volunteer workdays to service-learning projects with students and seasonally-focused solo projects. Volunteers are integrated into all aspects of the center's operations and play a variety of roles including:

Plant center assistants

(year round position)

Plant center assistants are the heart and soul of the program. Volunteers learn propagation and composting techniques and plant



identification skills while working with local native species from the region's wetland, forest, and prairie habitats. At the Native Plant Center volunteers harvest, clean and plant native seeds and bulbs, and monitor and maintain seed and nursery beds. Position available year round.

Seed scouts

(April through August)

This position starts with a day of training in April with classroom and field time learning plant identification, phenology data collection and use of GPS. Scouts choose a site to gain familiarity with the area and habitat. Skilled volunteers collect phenology (the relation of climate to biological occurrences such as flowering) data for the plant center's Bloomtime project while monitoring their respective sites. Scouts lead volunteers in targeted seed collection of uncommon species found growing in unique habitats on Metro natural areas. This position requires intermediate knowledge and prior experience working with native herbaceous species.



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Seed collectors (mid-May through October)

Once there are ripe seeds it is time for seed collectors. What better way to visit Metro's natural areas on a bright sunny June day than to collect seeds from uncommon and threatened species? This position begins with a day of training in June to learn seed and data collection protocol, plus a site visit for a hands-on experience and to join a field team. Collectors work with seed scouts to gather seed from targeted species on a site-by-site basis and record collection data while working outdoors in a beautiful Metro natural area. This position requires less of a time commitment than the scout position. Native plant identification is preferred, but not required.

Conservation educators (October through May)

Enthusiastic volunteers who have an interest in native plants and/or gardening, and are comfortable working with youth make great conservation educators. The conservation education program uses the Native Plant Center as an outdoor classroom to enhance students' learning through hands-on, place-based experiences while encouraging an understanding of land stewardship and conservation. Volunteers do not need to be native plant experts, but must be willing to get their hands dirty! For more information, contact Marci Krass at nativeplantcenter.volunteers@oregonmetro.gov.

There are also opportunities for volunteers to take lead roles on special projects at the plant center.

In the past, volunteers have organized nursery work areas, designed and planted demonstration beds, developed and implemented the Bloomtime project and salvaged plant species rare to the Portland metropolitan area. Some projects and opportunities are seasonal: bulb harvesting and planting, October through January; seeding and planting, October through May; and vegetation monitoring, data collection and management year round. Internships are available.

For more information, contact Marsha Holt-Kingsley at nativeplantcenter.volunteers@oregonmetro.gov.



About Metro

Clean air and clean water do not stop at city limits or county lines. Neither does the need for jobs, a thriving economy, and sustainable transportation and living choices for people and businesses in the region. Voters have asked Metro to help with the challenges and opportunities that affect the 25 cities and three counties in the Portland metropolitan area.

A regional approach simply makes sense when it comes to providing services, operating venues and making decisions about how the region grows. Metro works with communities to support a resilient economy, keep nature close by and respond to a changing climate. Together we're making a great place, now and for generations to come.

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