

THE ARBORETUM
AT PENN STATE



CHILDHOOD'S GATE
CHILDREN'S GARDEN
VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

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INTRODUCTION



This handbook is intended as a reference for volunteers working in the Childhood's Gate Children's Garden.

Volunteers play a central role in the garden. Volunteers handle daily tasks like opening the glass house and managing garden props and other materials used in learning and play. They provide tours and educational programming. They also help keep children safe in the garden, and help keep the garden safe from enthusiastic young visitors.

As a garden guide, it is expected that you will provide a supportive presence with the goal of enhancing the visitor experience. Guides do this by engaging visitors, sharing materials, pointing out seasonal elements of the garden, and answering questions. They move around the garden, talk to visitors, and note the interests of children and guide them in their exploration.

Thank you for your presence in the children's garden and your commitment to sharing this wonderful outdoor space with children and visitors of all ages. We truly could not tell the story of the garden without you!

TIPS FOR GARDEN GUIDES



- Wear your name badge.
- Bring your cell phone.
- Wear comfortable shoes. A hat, sunscreen, and lightweight clothing are highly recommended in the summer.
- Parking at the Arboretum is free to volunteers and visitors. Please take a pass from the

door of the main office. On weekends, overflow parking is available in the Dickinson School of Law's parking lot (adjacent to the Katz Building). Volunteers with PSU parking passes do not need an Arboretum permit.

OPENING AND CLOSING PROCEDURES

The children's garden is officially open from dawn to dusk. The Glass House is typically unlocked around 7 a.m., when garden crews arrive, and locked at 4 p.m.

UPON ARRIVAL

- Unlock the garden shed and glass house, if locked. Garden shed should be latched open on one upper side for visibility but left closed and latched at the lock, as it is not a safe place for children to play unaccompanied.
- Walk the entire garden, noting maintenance issues to report to Director of Horticulture Shari Edelson, in the Overlook Pavilion.
- Open windows in the glass house for fresh air, depending on weather. Fan may be running, depending on temperature. Fan should be kept on "auto" at all times but can

be turned off during programs as needed. If you turn the fan off, please remember to turn it back on!

- Check the book houses daily. We try to maintain a collection of 10 to 15 books per house.
- Notebook, relevant informational materials, and the volunteer sign-in sheet are kept on the left hand shelf in the garden shed. Please use the notebook to communicate observations, questions, and ideas related to your time in the garden.
- Refresh and add props to the garden. These may change according to weather, season, number of volunteers, and the visitors expected during the day. *See prop options for 2017.*
- Enjoy engaging visitors, walking the garden regularly to have good visibility. Circulate or share key locations with your volunteer partner.

CLOSING

- **Begin preparing for closing at least 15 minutes prior to your scheduled departure.**
- Take in all props with the exception of the following items:
 - Sand area toys (limit to 4 to 5 scoops and pails, remove other items)
 - Discovery Tree fairy village
 - Chalk and cloth by slate wall outside of cave
- As part of your volunteer orientation you will become familiar with the materials that are to remain in the garden overnight and on weekends. All other items are to be returned to storage locations inside the glass house or garden shed. If you are unsure as to where to store an item, a shelf in the glass house is fine.
- Leave any notes, observations, and questions in the notebook on the shelf in the garden shed.
- **Close all lower sliding windows in the glass house.** Upper windows can remain open in season.
- Lock the garden shed and glass house. If you do not have a key, please go to the main office, request a key, and return it before you depart. Be sure to latch all doors prior to locking them.
- Walk through the garden to be sure all litter is picked up or any “stray” materials are returned to their places in the garden or storage areas.
- Depart with wonderful memories of time spent in the garden with children of all ages. Thank you for your support to make the garden a place of discovery every day!

GARDEN STORAGE

GLASS HOUSE



- Locked drawers for volunteers' personal items, books for libraries, food service items.
- Locked cabinet area for watering cans, chalk, bird education materials, program and activity support.
- Unlocked areas for brochures, first aid backpack*, plastic bags, and cleaning supplies.

* First Aid backpack must be stored in the unlocked, far right drawer under the fairy drawer garden.

GARDEN SHED



- Storage for "office" supplies, learning materials, brooms, tables, garden props, decorative items, backpacks, books, umbrellas.
- Refrigerator/Freezer- for keeping things cool! Ice packs, drinks, staff lunches, food tasting items.

“ED SHED”

- Located behind Housing and Food Service Building.
- Provides storage for seasonal items, wagon, extra art materials, etc.

GARDEN PROPS, SUMMER 2017



Volunteers prepare the garden for visitors according to the weather, the number of visitors expected that day, and their own comfort level with the materials. The garden is a place of constant discovery as the seasons change. Many visitors are in the garden for the first time, and there is always something new to explore.

Please remember that it is your responsibility to be sure that any items you add to the gardens are used appropriately and returned at the end of your shift. It is usually a good idea to put out fewer items that will be explored carefully than to put out all available materials.

A typical morning set-up includes:

- Two tic-tac-toe tree boards and boxes with stones and corks, checkers and cloth “board”. These can be located wherever the volunteer feels is best.
- Two discovery tables. Please ask for assistance, if needed, to move the tables out of the glass house.
- Tree house in glass house set up on central table.
- Paint brushes and water in containers between glass house and harvest gardens.
- Boats or water play items in trough.
- Fish nets at end of creek in wire basket with sign.

In addition to the regularly used props, above, volunteers may choose among the materials in the garden shed to engage visitors:

- **Bird Explorer backpacks**- sign-up sheet and instructions are located on the shelf in the garden shed. All backpacks are clearly labeled and must be checked when returned to you.
- **Magnifying loupes**- for looking closely at nature. Best for children ages 5 and up.
- **Fairy wings and creature cloaks**- in the Discovery Tree.
- **Scavenger hunts**- in the basket in the glass house. Good for families and groups, along with garden maps.
- **Garden games**- checkers, matching games, story stones.
- **Books**- in the glass house and garden shed. **These books are to remain in the garden;** they are not a part of the Little Book House Collection. You are always welcome to read to the children!
- **Tree “cookies” and pine cones**- in the crop houses.
- **Garden plant list**- for the many people who ask about the plants in the harvest garden.

GARDEN ACTIVITIES



Garden activities occur on weekday mornings from 10 a.m. -12 p.m. These activities are typically related to the harvest from the gardens, nature arts and crafts, bird identification programs, design features, and community traditions.

The children’s garden program calendars are posted on the window at the entrance to the glass house and in the office at the pavilion. They are also available on our website: www.arboretum.psu.edu

GARDEN GUIDANCE

The children’s garden offers the opportunity to engage children of all ages within a natural setting. Our design features include water, rocks, plants, dirt, and sand. When children explore natural materials, there are bound to be challenges as children’s growing abilities and curiosity comes into conflict with the safety measures which adults must enforce. The guidelines for the garden are posted at the entrance and should be a point of reference. There are also signs

throughout the garden regarding wading in the creek, and climbing the tree, walls, high rocks, and shelf mushrooms inside the Discovery Tree.

If you observe children using materials inappropriately or challenging the garden rules, please:

- Approach calmly with the intent to guide behavior
- Identify the behavior that is inappropriate and request that the child refrain or stop
- Provide reasons for the request
- Offer an alternative activity or redirect to another area.

Examples:

“I see that you are interested in the garden plants, but there are some rules about picking our flowers and vegetables. Would you like me to help you identify some of our plants? Let’s see if we can smell the herbs by touching them gently.”

“You need to come down from the rocks, because this area is not safe for climbing. If you fall, the ground is hard! Here are the signs.”

“I see you brought your lunch, but we have rules about food inside the children’s garden. There is a place for picnics behind the pavilion. Let me show you where to go.”

RULES OF THE CHILDREN’S GARDEN

The following rules are posted at the entrance to the children’s garden.

Welcome through Childhood’s Gate, the Children’s Garden in the H.O Smith Botanic Gardens

This is your garden—a place of transformation, discovery, and learning. Experience the unique history, beauty, and culture of our region. Be inspired to become a steward of our world for every generation.

Be curious

This is a learning landscape for children of all ages to explore together. Our garden guides are here to support your experience in the garden. Wander, wonder, explore, and ask questions.

Be safe

Children twelve years of age and under must be in the company of an adult who is responsible for their supervision at all times. Please keep two feet on the ground. It is not safe to climb on the walls, cave, Discovery Tree, or large boulders in the garden.

Our rocks are tools for learning. They are not for throwing.

There are several water features within the children's garden. Wading is permissible in the In and Out Creek and in the water on the floor of the Limestone Cave, but children should not enter the water features near the garden entrance.

Be respectful

Please enjoy and learn about our plants by sight, smell, or gentle touch, but do not pick or damage them.

Please remain on the paths and do not walk in the garden beds.

Learning materials and tools are to remain in the garden for others to enjoy.

Be aware of the needs of others in the garden.

Be responsible

Help keep our garden clean. Please use our trash and recycling bins.

The Garden is growing, just like you. Thank you for helping us to take care of it.

HEALTH AND SAFETY IN THE CHILDREN'S GARDEN

IN AN EMERGENCY:

- In the event of a medical or life threatening emergency, call 911.
- University Police can be reached at (814) 863-1111. Outdoor Campus Emergency Phones are located at the parking lot entrance to the Arboretum nearest the Overlook Pavilion and on Bigler Road at the entrance to the Katz Building. These phones will connect the caller with University Police.
- The phone number for the Overlook Pavilion is (814) 865-8080.
- The phone number for the Arboretum's administrative office (320 Forest Resources Building) is (814) 867-2591.

- All the above information is posted in the garden shed on the wall above the office shelf.

FIRST AID

In the event of a non-life threatening injury, there is a first aid backpack located in the top right hand drawer of the glass house nearest the door that leads to the harvest gardens.

You should not provide first aid unless you are currently certified and then only within the restrictions of your certification. You may provide the first aid backpack to the supervising adult to use.

There is an injury report located in the backpack. Please fill out the report and submit it to the office in the pavilion as soon as possible following the incident.

WEATHER EMERGENCY

In the event of a thunderstorm, ask all visitors to vacate the glass house and lock the doors. Recommend that visitors seek shelter in the cave or leave grounds prior to storm. Lewis Katz Law School Building may offer indoor shelter if open and is located across Bigler Road.

GROUP VISITS IN THE CHILDREN'S GARDEN

The weekly schedule for expected visits is always available on the shelf in the garden shed.

The Arboretum has policies and procedures for group visits to the children's garden. Groups are expected to contact the tour coordinator in advance of their visit. Nevertheless, it is not unusual for groups with large numbers of children to arrive without prior notice.

Please approach groups with courtesy and ask for information regarding their group: the number and ages of children, the amount of time the group expects to spend in the garden, the number of adults accompanying the children.

If a group is not on the visitor schedule, politely note that we appreciate advance notice for groups so that we can provide a good visitor experience and adjust activities and programs if necessary.

When possible, encourage large groups to break up into smaller assemblies of 5-10 children per adult. Smaller groups generally have an easier time enjoying and exploring garden features.

Offer maps, scavenger hunt opportunities, and an overview of what is happening in the garden. Point out the garden guidelines. Invite visitors to participate in activities.

WHAT GROUPS SHOULD (BUT DON'T ALWAYS) KNOW

The following information is provided on our web site under the "Visit" link. Groups who register through Kelly Oleynik for visits to the Arboretum are provided with a great deal of information in order to prepare for their visit.

4) SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR SCHOOL GROUPS AND CHILD-RELATED ORGANIZATIONS

Reservations are required for visits by school groups (including home school groups) and child-related organizations (e.g., daycare, scouting groups, and summer camps). At least one teacher or chaperone is required for every five pre-school children, every ten children who are in kindergarten through middle school, and every twenty youths who are of high school age. Teachers or group chaperones are responsible for supervising minors who visit the Arboretum, ensuring their safety and compliance with visitation rules. In the event of an emergency, it is expected that groups will execute their prescribed internal policies concerning safety, medical and special needs. All visitation rules are posted at the entrances to the gardens and contained on the last page of this policy (see downloadable PDF below).

The Arboretum will not provide a staff person or docent to support these visits.

Teachers are encouraged to make a visit in advance to become familiar with the layout and plantings in the botanic gardens. This is especially recommended for groups planning visits to Childhood's Gate Children's Garden.

Groups visiting the Arboretum are welcome to participate in activities taking place in the children's garden. Please see our website for information.

If you are interested in reviewing the information for group visits in more detail please go to: <https://arboretum.psu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Arboretum-Tour-Group-policy-March-2016.pdf>

SCHEDULING VOLUNTEER SHIFTS

SIGNING UP FOR A SHIFT

To sign up for or cancel a shift in the children's garden, please use the SignUpGenius link: <http://www.signupgenius.com/>

New shifts will go online every week.

CANCELING YOUR SHIFT

If you are cancelling a shift more than 48 hours in advance, please use the SignUpGenius link.

If you must cancel **48 hours or less** in advance of your scheduled shift, please contact Linda Duerr at lmd9@psu.edu so that she can arrange for a substitute.

WEEKEND HOURS

Please notify Linda if you plan to work as a volunteer in the garden during the weekends. The Arboretum needs to know who is present in an official capacity at all times.

ARBORETUM CONTACT INFORMATION

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