

London Parks & Gardens Trust

'A Trusted voice for London's parks and gardens and the people who care for them'

Volunteer Handbook

Content

Section 1

Welcome

About LP>

Strategic Direction

Objectives and Purpose

Vision

The Team

Duck Island Cottage

Section 2

What's a volunteer?

Who can volunteer?

What do volunteers do?

Why Volunteer?

Do you need experience to volunteer?

Appendix

- LPGT Values and behaviours
- Confidentiality and GDPR
- Health and Safety
- Equality and Diversity
- Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults
- Registration process and form
- Expenses process and form
- Timesheets

Welcome

Hello there! You are amazing... because if you are reading this you are interested in the London Parks & Gardens Trust - possibly thinking of volunteering, just started volunteering or already volunteering with us. At London Parks & Gardens Trust we cherish and value our volunteers because without people like you the Trust would not exist. It is a splendid network of more than 500 volunteers who help the Trust make a real difference for London's green spaces. How does this happen? Through Celebrating, Championing and Cultivating a love of parks and gardens. We Celebrate through our programme of activities including Open Garden Squares Weekend; Champion through the planning system by highlighting historic significance; and Cultivate knowledge and skills through things like London Gardens Online, research projects and publications. This handbook is designed to tell you more about the Trust and the work we do, and let you know how volunteering contributes to the whole of the Trust, and values.

It also provides information on practical things like claiming expenses and what to do if you have any concerns. We want you to have an enjoyable, engaging experience with the Trust. So, thank you for your support and interest. We hope it will be a positive growing relationship and encourage you to get stuck in.

**London Parks & Gardens Trust
January 2020**

Section 1

About London Parks & Gardens Trust

London Parks & Gardens Trust (LPGT) is an independent registered charity (No:1042337) and company limited by guarantee (No: 2935176), established in 1994. We are a small voluntary organisation with some part-time staff. In legal terms, each member of the Board is a Charity Trustee and a Director of the company. The individual members of the Board are referred to as Trustees.

The Trust's charitable objects, as set out in the Memorandum and Articles are to: *promote the education of the public on matters connected with the arts and sciences of historic gardens and preserve, enhance and re-create for the education and enjoyment of the public, whatever historic garden land may exist or have existed in and around London.*

The Board of Trustees has overall responsibility for governance of the organisation and for setting and monitoring strategic and business plans. Trust members elect the Trustees at the Annual General Meeting (AGM). The Board meets six times a year and reports to the Trust members in an Annual Report. The Annual Report is presented to members of the Trust at the AGM and lodged with the Charity Commissioners.

The Board of Trustees is made up of volunteers who bring a range of skills, knowledge and experience to the organisation. The Board elects a Chair to run Board meetings and takes the lead for the strategic organisation. Each area of the Trust's work is organised by a committee/group of volunteers with occasional staff input. The Trust is a member of our national parent body, The Gardens Trust, which represents 36 County and Country Gardens Trusts (CGTs) covering England and Wales.

The Gardens Trust is a statutory consultee in the planning process, which means that it has to be consulted by local planning authorities on planning applications which would affect parks and gardens on Historic England's Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Interest in England. The Gardens Trust shares this information and role with CGTs, which in London is with the London Parks & Gardens Trust.

LPGT's Purpose and Mission

The Trust aspires to become '*A trusted voice for London's Parks and Gardens and the people who care for them*'.

Trusted – This was chosen as it represents strong, knowledgeable, collaborative, influential, respected and is a play on the word Trust

Voice – we represent a membership and are affiliated to The Gardens Trust which is a statutory consultee for planning. We have an audience through OGSW and walks, study tours and talks

People – people who live, work, study in or visit London and care about the city's green spaces. We seek to conserve them for, and celebrate them with, these people.

LPGT's Strategic Direction.

The Trust delivers on its mission and purpose by setting a strategic direction. For detailed information please visit the website:

<http://londongardenstrust.org/docs/180725Strategy.pdf>

It can be summarised as follows:

Champion – responding to planning applications and campaigns, by storytelling and narratives, publishing knowledge, protecting and supporting green spaces and having an influencing presence and support when people are making decisions.

Celebrate – hosting Open Gardens Squares Weekend, walks, tours, talks, thanking volunteers, engaging and collaborating with others, providing events and sharing information.

Cultivate – educating the general public, providing learning and training, research and interpretation, academic and community resources.

For the next 3 to 5 years the focus will be on:

- Influencing - through our activities and networks, more Londoners will value and support their parks and gardens
- Resilience - the Trust will have a sustainable future to undertake its charitable objectives
- Joy - our volunteers will be fulfilled supporting the Trust so that more Londoners will love and enjoy being in this amazing city. People will discover and develop a passion for London's parks and gardens

These headings have individual desired outcomes which can be found in the Strategic Directions. Each committee group will be working to deliver against some specific outcomes.

The team

LPGT is primarily made up of volunteers such as yourself. Volunteers are assisted by a few paid part-time staff and consultants.

The volunteers have a variety of roles. Some work out in the field surveying or researching gardens or welcoming visitors to gardens during Open Garden Squares Weekend (OSGW). Some are office or home-based, doing things such as writing for our newsletter and journal, organising lectures and visits, or managing the LPGT website and membership information.

The staff work with and support the committees/groups. Each committee/group will have its own meetings, time and regularity, which will vary depending on the time of year and what the projects are. Your group secretary will let you know when meetings are held and when you have to attend. You are encouraged to attend these meetings to understand the role and to mix with other volunteers/staff members. They are often valuable

opportunities to learn about and contribute to developing the work or to share experiences, find out about other openings which may be of interest and discuss wider Trust issues that could have bearing on your voluntary role with us.

Duck Island Cottage

The Trust is fortunate to have the use of Duck Island Cottage in St James's Park as its HQ and office. The Cottage is owned by The Crown Estate and managed by The Royal Parks. The Cottage is usually staffed on Tuesday, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 10am to 3pm. Volunteers and committees/groups are able to make use of the Cottage for meetings and work at other times of the week, but if it is needed and part of your role outline you should contact the staff in advance on: office@londongordenstrust.org to agree dates, times, keys, and security arrangements. Please note that whilst Duck Island Cottage is a fantastic location, the facilities are limited. The office can suggest other places and also welcomes volunteers using their own resources to set up meeting places.

Section 2

What is a volunteer?

The term volunteer means slightly different things to different people, different cultures and different organisations. At LPGT, we really value any person who freely chooses to carry out a task or role that we have specifically asked them to do, which contributes to the aims and objectives of the Trust and for which the volunteers do not receive any financial or material gain. Volunteers are not necessarily members of the Trust though they are encouraged to join to support the financial resilience of the organisation.

What do our volunteers do?

At LPGT volunteers carry out most of the work undertaken by the Trust – these include a wide range of roles depending on their own interests and abilities, such as Website Manager, researchers, organising fundraising or activities. As a volunteer, you will be given a Role Outline, which describes what work you will be doing and how that fits within the wider purpose of the Trust.

Who can volunteer?

Anyone with a passion to champion, celebrate or cultivate London's historic green spaces and can share their skills and experience. Our volunteers represent all ages and abilities; they come from all over London and from all backgrounds, bringing an incredible variety of skills and experiences.

Why volunteer with us?

Volunteering has many benefits for both you as a volunteer and for us as an organisation. We believe you will find it educational, inspirational and fun to be part of our team.

Volunteering is also a great opportunity to meet new people and work with old friends. The benefits of volunteering within green spaces are three-fold: the opportunity to work outside in beautiful green parks of London: the activity of regular exercise and the engagement with like-minded people can all help to maintain your wellbeing and personal development.

Do you need prior experience to become a volunteer?

We welcome and encourage people from all walks of life, with a variety of life experiences, to become involved. Some roles require specific skills or experience, but most allow you to learn as you go along and sometimes after receiving appropriate training.

You will always be fully briefed on your role and the tasks you will be involved with and we will make training available as and when it is needed to undertake your role or enhance your skills, but welcome you using your own Initiative too.

Your responsibilities to the Trust

Each role will entail different tasks, offer different benefits and carry different level of responsibilities. These are outlined in the relevant role outline. The leader of your committee/group will go through these with you when you start. However, we expect all

volunteers to:

- Communicate any concerns you may have, or if you are uncertain you can meet the requirements of your role, for any reason.
- Inform the group secretary, group leader or other relevant person if you do not feel confident you have received the appropriate guidelines and information necessary to carry out your role.
- Make sure you are aware of Trust policies and guidelines that are relevant to your role as explained in the volunteers' section of the Trust's website.
- Meet the general commitments necessary to carry out your role. Be mindful of your status as a Trust Ambassador in your community and comply with the Trust Values and expected behaviours

Our responsibilities to you

The Trust also has responsibilities to you, a valued volunteer, many of which are outlined in this handbook or in more detail on the Trust's website and will be discussed with you when you start.

If you volunteer with us, we will:

- provide a friendly welcome and a thorough induction to the organisation and your role within it
- endeavour to show our appreciation and to recognise the contribution of volunteers wherever appropriate
- provide you with feedback and support to help you fulfil the role and seek your views about your volunteering experience
- make good use of your skills, knowledge and abilities to further our aims and objectives
- provide volunteers with a clear role outline, instruction and any relevant additional training in all tasks we ask you to undertake
- undertake to look after your health and safety in relation to your role and will insure you in the event of an accident that is not your fault
- undertake to make sure everyone has an equal opportunity to be involved
- help you to deal with any problems that arise
- reimburse all pre-agreed expenses that you incur during the course of your volunteering.

Registration

All volunteers need to complete a [volunteer registration form](#). This provides basic contact details and an outline of your profile, skills and interest areas (In some circumstances two referees will be requested. We will notify you if you need to provide referees). We keep this information on our volunteer database and only use it for LPGT purposes relevant to your volunteering (unless you have chosen to receive additional information such as our monthly e-newsletter). The statistical information is used by the Board to better understand the volunteer base. The volunteer registration form can be downloaded [here](#) from the Trust's website.

Expenses

LPGT recognises that the cost of volunteering may be a barrier to people engaging in the programmes and does not expect anyone to be 'out of pocket' as a result of their volunteering contribution. If you find that you have had to undertake some expenditure as a part of your role, the Trust will reimburse you. To claim for these expenses our Committee/group leader must have agreed the expense beforehand. You will need to complete a simple form and provide receipts to reclaim any agreed expenses and this can be downloaded from the Trust website.

Insurance

LPGT will ensure that it holds the requisite insurance cover.

Timesheets

We ask all our volunteers to help us to promote recognition of the amazing contribution they make to LPGT by recording your hours with us. This should include all work for the Trust whether at home, in the office, at meetings or elsewhere. We can often make particular use of recording volunteer hours in applications for funding new work and in helping to evidence what we have achieved as part of current funding that we receive. The timesheet can be downloaded from the Trust's website [here](#), but we are also developing our volunteer database so you can record your time straight onto the database and minimise your holding unnecessary documents. If you provide 25 hours to the Trust per year, you will be entitled to claim free membership of the Trust.

Confidentiality and data protection

All personal information provided by volunteers will be kept strictly confidential and will not be shared outside the organisation without prior agreement of the volunteer. All volunteer data will be handled properly and in accordance with the law. It is also important that you maintain confidentiality about LPGT information which you may become aware of whilst volunteering for the Trust.

Health, safety and accidents

LPGT will take all reasonably practicable steps to ensure that all volunteers' health safety and welfare are protected in accordance with the LPGT policy. We take your safety seriously and have a legal responsibility to provide and maintain working conditions, equipment and procedures which are safe and will not adversely affect your health. Risk Assessments will be carried out for a range of activities and events by the project leaders and any potential hazards identified and mitigated against. Any accidents or incidents should be reported using the report form available on the Trust website.

Support

Following your induction to the Trust, the amount of ongoing support you are offered will vary depending upon the individual and the role. However, all volunteers should have the opportunity to ask questions, raise concerns and discuss the work they are involved with. This may entail a simple conversation during a tea-break, or a phone call or email may suffice. Others will find one-to one meeting with their project volunteer useful. Each new volunteer will be given a named 'Buddy' for the purpose of supporting them into the organisation.

We aim to make all volunteering experiences positive and enjoyable, but we recognise that problems may arise from time to time. You might be unhappy about your experience or a complaint may be made about an individual. Sometimes complaints are in relation to breaches of policy or procedure. If you have a problem, you should first talk to your committee/group leader and arrange a meeting of those involved, away from the immediate task. Most issues can be resolved in this way. If this proves unsuccessful or you consider the matter to be more serious, please refer to the volunteering section of the Trust's complaints policy which you will find on the website.

Equality and Diversity

Volunteers and staff will act at all times in accordance with the LPGT equality and diversity policy and seek to actively prevent discrimination on any grounds. LPGT recognises that people volunteer for a variety of reasons and each person may hold a wide spectrum of expectations of what they hope to gain from volunteering and what they have to offer LPGT. Volunteers always bring an important diverse range of skills, knowledge and experience which contributes to achieving LPGT's aims and objectives. All potential volunteers will be provided with details of the roles and tasks that need to be undertaken. These will help to deliver the aims and objectives and to assist identification of the areas of work which the volunteer is most interested in and suitable for. A range of recruitment methods will be used to ensure that all volunteers have opportunities to be engaged in new projects or different areas of work. These will be open to people regardless of ethnic or national origins, age, reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, and orientation, economic circumstance, or any other matter which causes people to be treated with prejudice.

Feedback

Your feedback is valuable to us. If at any time you feel that any aspect of your involvement with us as a volunteer could have been managed better, please let us know so we can make improvements.

Staying in touch

The experience of volunteers is important to LPGT and we will periodically invite you to provide feedback on your involvement and experience so we can improve the way we operate. Your help in returning feedback to us and your honest constructive criticism where appropriate is appreciated.

Moving on

If you decide to stop volunteering with us, please let us know by coming to an exit interview with either your group leader or the volunteer coordinator. It would also be helpful if you also tell us why you have decided to leave and give us some notice where your role is time-dependent and we will need to look for a replacement. Equally, the Trust may from time to time change the focus of its work and stop certain volunteering opportunities.

Training and development

For most roles you will receive relevant 'on-the-job' training from your group leader or an experienced fellow volunteer. Often someone will continue to be on hand to give you further support, advice and help or a refresher (some tasks are only done once or a few times per year). If you are unsure about what you are doing, please do ask.

For some roles, more formal training may be required, and this should be discussed during your induction. It may be arranged immediately, or you may be added to a waiting list pending the next session. This type of training may include health and safety or could relate specifically to your volunteer role. Once you've started volunteering, if you feel you need further training to fulfil your role, please speak with your group leader.

Tell us about your experiences

We like to hear stories about our volunteers. It might be a 'day in the life of...', a description of your role, a volunteer profile or a special achievement. These stories help us to paint a picture of volunteering for our newsletter, website, press releases, members' magazine and social media. Please get in touch if you would like to see your story in print! Email: office@londongardenstrust.org