2020-21 Docent Training Program

Ruth Bancroft’s intrepid experiment growing succulents in our northern California landscape made her a pioneer in the early 1970s. Since then, her vibrant palette and exceptional plant compositions prove that we don’t have to sacrifice beauty or variety to create ecologically responsible, water-conserving gardens.

Docents are the key to making a visit to the Ruth Bancroft Garden both meaningful and memorable. This fall we’ve revamped the docent training program to integrate more fully the understanding of its history and design principles with knowledge of the outstanding plant collections. The next 10-session training program begins in September 2020. Applications will be available in August.

Each session focuses on a core concept for succulents and cacti, such as adaptations to our arid environment, the variety of means for pollination and reproduction, evolution and hybridization. Trainees take this understanding out into the garden, to ground their insights in specific places and particular plants.

Our docents will enable visitors of all ages to inhabit in the garden more fully, with all our senses, absorbing its beauty from ground level to the tree-canopy. Appreciating the flow and rhythm of the garden, its invitation to pause, relax, and reflect, comes from learning the best ways to engage our audience, to tell plant stories, and to link new information to what visitors bring.

During the second half of the course, docents will develop individualized tours around themes (e.g. designing with succulents, water-wise gardening, pollinating and reproduction), by shadowing tours with veteran docents and practicing mini-tours with supportive feedback. Steeped in plant lore, grounded in this amazing place, they have the tools to produce those “ah’s” and “wow’s” of excited discovery in others.

Continuing opportunities for expanding knowledge about the garden and interacting with other docents will be available monthly.

This year’s docent training class is a deeply engaged group from a wide range of backgrounds who all share Ruth’s intellectual curiosity and her passion for plants. We’re delighted they’ve joined our community of dedicated volunteers and are diving deep into the garden.

Want to join the core of dedicated volunteers? Contact Susan Van Dyne, Docent Coordinator at Susan@ruthbancroftgarden.org