



Overview of the 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. The Docent Training Program enables trained volunteers to integrate the history of the garden and Ruth's enduring design principles with knowledge of the outstanding plant collections. We hope that the next 10-session training program will begin in September 2020, if restrictions are lifted. Applications are available now and will be due in August.

Each training 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, the evolution of plant families and hybridization. Trainees take this understanding out into the garden, to ground their insights in specific beds, and knowledge of particular plants.

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, adaptation), by shadowing tours with veteran docents and practicing mini-tours with supportive feedback. Steeped in plant lore, grounded in this amazing place, they gain 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 through the Docent Enrichment programs in the garden and on fieldtrips.

The 2020 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 who bring Ruth's legacy to a wider public.

Want to join the core of dedicated volunteers? Contact Susan Van Dyne, Docent Program Director

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