



Overview of the 2021-22 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 late September 2021.

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 the knowledge of 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, 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.

Our docents come from a wide range of backgrounds who all share Ruth's intellectual curiosity and her passion for plants. They are central to 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, Director of the Docent Program

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