

The Lake Wilderness Arboretum Plant Patrol

Introduction

The Lake Wilderness Arboretum Plant Patrol (hereafter referred to as the “Plant Patrol”) is a joint effort among the Tahoma (Maple Valley) School District, the Lake Wilderness Arboretum Foundation, and the Education Committee of the Central Puget Sound Chapter of the Washington Native Plant Society. Currently, we are recruiting members for the Plant Patrol - a group of volunteers who will assist elementary school teachers during field trips at the Lake Wilderness Arboretum or during natural science activities in the classroom. Initially, Plant Patrol members will support fourth grade teachers at Lake Wilderness Elementary. Subsequently, we will expand the program to cover other grades and schools as appropriate.

This document provides information to potential members of the Plant Patrol - what is required, why volunteer now, how do you volunteer, and what happens after you join the patrol.

What would be required of you as a volunteer on the “Plant Patrol?”

There will be two roles for which you can volunteer. You can volunteer for either role or both roles. You might decide to fulfill role #1 first and then as you become more familiar with the Arboretum, you may choose to support both roles. The roles are shown below:

1. Assist the teacher with a lesson plan and activity that he or she has prepared

This job will be the first type of role fulfilled by Plant Patrol members. The lesson plan and activity will probably take place in the Arboretum during a field trip, but it may occur at the school. Basically, you will be an extra pair of hands (and eyes) helping students as they work on tasks assigned by their teacher. Typically, students will be outside and will be asked to observe plants and other natural objects and then record their observations, draw pictures, and/or answer questions about what they are observing. Student worksheets will be provided to the students by the teacher. The assignments are simple enough so that your experience with native plants and native plant habitat requires no additional training on your part. You are there to buttress and enhance the student’s learning experience by providing some of your own unique knowledge and experience. You are encouraged to help the students by pointing out things that they might not otherwise notice – plant size, shape, texture, parts, how one plant differs from another, etc. Knowing the names of a few plants doesn’t hurt either J .

2. Conduct an activity in the Lake Wilderness Arboretum

All materials and instructions would be provided to you by the teacher or by the leader of the Plant Patrol. In this role, you would guide a group of students to an area in the Arboretum (map and directions provided) where you would then lead a discussion and activity in which students would record their observations via text and/or drawings. The activities would be appropriate for students in the fourth grade. Example activities might be:

- Learn about a nurse log by making observations and reasoning about what is going on
- Learn about wetland plants and make observations about what looks different in the wetland area
- Observe an abnormally large Douglas fir and reason about why it’s so big
- Look into the forest and observe its structure and the plants that comprise it.

All materials would be provided to you with points to make, answers to questions, map to the area, etc. Training can be provided to you; or, if you are comfortable teaching it, you would not be required to do any training. Added information that you bring to the table as a plant enthusiast will enhance the lesson and make it special for the students.

How much time is required?

Once you arrive at the venue (either the Arboretum or the school) the lessons/activity that you will be supporting or conducting will last about 45-90 minutes. Depending on the number of Plant Patrol members and their availability, you may be participating in 1-4 events per year. Naturally, because this is a volunteer situation, you are always free to accept or not accept an invitation to help. We anticipate that the lesson plans are simple enough that no training will be required. However, training will be provided if you request it.

Why are we asking you to sign up for the Plant Patrol now?

There are two reasons for signing up members of the Patrol ahead of time.

1. The lead time between when a teacher sends a request for a Plant Patrol volunteer and when the event is to take place can be a relatively short time (1-2 weeks). Consequently, prior to asking people to support a field trip at the Arboretum or at an in-school activity, we want to have a list of people who are predisposed to volunteer for such a task. This "pre-selected" list will increase the likelihood that volunteers will be available when we need them.
2. People who volunteer for the Tahoma School District need to undergo a background check, which is a very simple process and is a standard procedure to insure the safety and security of students. By going through this process first, we can be assured that all members of the plant patrol are pre-cleared and no delays will occur when a volunteering opportunity comes up. The clearance process is a quick, simple, confidential process in which the necessary forms to complete will be provided to you. Once completed, the forms can be delivered by you to the school district in person, by email, or by U.S. Mail. The only information that the school district will provide to the Plant Patrol leader is that you have passed the background check.

What happens after you are accepted into the Plant Patrol?

The first thing that will happen is that the Plant Patrol Coordinator will inform you that you have passed the background check and that you are officially on the Plant Patrol. Then, when a teacher informs me that they need one or more Plant Patrol volunteers, the Plant Patrol Coordinator will send you an email, requesting your help. If you indicate that you can support the event, the Plant Patrol Coordinator will respond to you that the teacher will be expecting you at the event. In case the Plant Patrol Coordinator get more volunteers than needed for an event, he or she will pick volunteers on a first come first serve basis.

What should you do next?

1. Send an email to the Plant Patrol Coordinator, John Neorr(neorrj@yahoo.com), if you would like to join the Plant Patrol.
2. Read the [Tahoma Volunteer Packet](http://plantsteward.com/PlantPatrol/Docs/volunteer_packet.pdf) - http://plantsteward.com/PlantPatrol/Docs/volunteer_packet.pdf
This will take about 10 minutes.
3. Fill out and submit the [Volunteer Application](http://plantsteward.com/PlantPatrol/Docs/volunteer_application.pdf) - http://plantsteward.com/PlantPatrol/Docs/volunteer_application.pdf
This will take less than 10 minutes. Once it has been filled out, send it to the address shown on the form or email a scanned version to Andrea Hull (Andrea@tahomasd.us).

The background check is usually completed in 7-10 days. Once the background check has been performed, the Patrol Coordinator will send you a welcome note. If you have any questions, contact John Neorr at neorrj@yahoo.com or 253-631-4727.