

GARDENS OF GOLDEN GATE PARK

Position Title: Curator & Conservation Lead

Hours: Full time (35-hour work week); Hybrid, at least 3 days a week onsite

Role Classification: Regular with Benefits

Exemption: Exempt

Reports to: Chief Executive Officer

Salary: \$125,000 to \$145,000

ABOUT THE GARDENS OF GOLDEN GATE PARK

The mission of Gardens of Golden Gate Park is to connect people to plants, the planet, and each other. Gardens of Golden Gate Park is a public/private partnership between the San Francisco Recreation & Park Department (RPD) and the San Francisco Botanical Garden Society (SFBGS) to jointly operate the Conservatory of Flowers, Japanese Tea Garden, and San Francisco Botanical Garden. A Lease & Management Agreement between RPD and SFBGS, approved by both the Recreation & Park Commission and the Board of Supervisors, sets the terms of the partnership. The agreement is a cooperative management agreement that outlines the roles and responsibilities for each partner. Key areas of responsibility for SFBGS include volunteer engagement, education, visitor experience, philanthropy, membership, marketing, and other functions. RPD is responsible for horticulture and facility management and maintenance, master planning and capital improvements conducted with SFBGS, and other functions. Together, RPD and SFBGS collaborate on collections management within the Gardens.

The Conservatory of Flowers is a national, state, and local landmark and a place of exceptional beauty. Built in 1879, the Conservatory was the first formal structure erected in Golden Gate Park and remains an internationally renowned icon, displaying and cultivating unusual plants to heighten awareness of the pressing need to preserve threatened rainforest environments.

The Japanese Tea Garden is the oldest operating public Japanese garden in North America. This garden provides visitors from around the world with an opportunity to experience the natural beauty, tranquility, and harmony of a Japanese-style garden and was originally created as an exhibit for the 1894 California Midwinter International Exposition.

San Francisco Botanical Garden opened in 1940 and is a 55-acre living museum within Golden Gate Park, showcasing 8,000 different kinds of plants from around the world. San Francisco's oceanic climate with cool dry summers, mild wet winters, and presence of fog allows the Garden to grow a diverse array of species from around the world.

POSITION SUMMARY

Reporting to the Chief Executive Officer, the Curator & Conservation Lead and their team work with RPD horticulture staff under the leadership and guidance of the RPD Garden Director in consultation with the CEO. Primary responsibilities of the Curator include leading the documentation and development of the Gardens' living collections and relaunching conservation initiatives. This position builds, manages, and leads a team comprised of the Plant Propagation Manager, Plant Collections Manager, Collections Coordinator, and Collections Assistant; collaborates with RPD staff to enhance the living collections; and works with all departments, donors, board members, volunteers, and partner organizations to leverage and interpret the importance of the Gardens' living collections.

Three years into a merger, this is an exciting time to join the Gardens of Golden Gate Park, now a top ten public garden with record-breaking visitation, a brand-new plant nursery, a comprehensive strategic plan, and a new interpretive master plan.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Development, curation, documentation, and management of the living collections

- In collaboration with the RPD Garden Director, implement and maintain plans and policies to guide development and maintenance of the living collections.
- Participate in project planning for new and existing gardens, coordinating with the RPD Garden Director, RPD horticultural staff, landscape designers, and other contractors to enhance the garden displays and preserve the quality of the living collections.
- In collaboration, identify sources and acquire new plants for the Gardens' collections through seed and plant exchange, trade, or purchase.
- Ensure that plants are correctly identified, and accessions are appropriately documented in an effective database, with content, accessibility, and functionality for all relevant staff and other audiences.
- Ensure that the Gardens follow exemplary collections management protocols and best practices.
- Oversee the use of GIS technology for collections mapping and documentation.
- Ensure that information resources on collections are in accessible formats.

Conservation initiatives

- Develop the first phase of a conservation plan outlining goals, milestones, partnerships, consortiums, and funding requirements and sources to build capacity to execute plant conservation at an appropriate scale and rate of growth.
- Coordinate and drive institution wide activities to activate participation in the [Climate Tool Kit](#).
- Seek and engage opportunities and partnerships to leverage the Garden's ability to support local and international plant conservation work.
- Formalize and leverage partnerships with local, national, and international organizations to grow and share our living collections.

Retail plant propagation program

- Supervise the Plant Propagation Manager who manages a volunteer program to produce plants for sale propagated from the Gardens' living collection and organizes plant sale events.
- In partnership with the Plant Propagation Manager, Retail Manager, and Chief Financial Officer, implement and refine the plant propagation and retail business plan to become a self-sustaining program.

Support research, education, and engagement with the Gardens' collections

- Directly respond, and coordinate responses, to requests for information, research, and access from visiting researchers, horticultural professionals, and other individuals.
- Serve as a Gardens ambassador to plant societies, the horticultural community, donors, visitors, and the public.
- In alignment with the Interpretive Master Plan and in collaboration with the Interpretive Program Manager, educate visitors, volunteers, and staff about the living collections through writing, editing, training, and speaking on behalf of the Gardens as a thought leader in the field.

Provide leadership, supervision, and mentoring

- Manage and mentor the Plant Collections Manager, Plant Propagation Manager, and other collections staff.
- Develop and manage budgets and work plans, and, where appropriate, establish and track metrics to measure effectiveness of collections operations.
- Work closely with Experience team to develop interpretive offerings accessible to a diverse range of visitors.

- Work with the Advancement team to raise funds for the Gardens through grant writing, meeting with donors, attending fundraising events, providing tours, and fostering relationships with donors, volunteers, and the community.
- Serve on the Leadership Team to guide the implementation of institutional goals, and in that capacity, act as a role model.

EXPERIENCE & QUALIFICATIONS

- Master's degree or higher in botany, horticulture, or related field.
- At least five years of collections management experience in a botanical garden or similar setting, including experience managing and mentoring other staff, volunteers and interns, as well as performing the other responsibilities outlined for this position.
- Knowledge and experience with curatorial best practices, including using database(s) for collections management, is required.
- Deep botanical knowledge, complemented by horticultural understanding and experience with horticultural practice, is required.
- Strong understanding of conservation best practices within the parameters of a public botanical garden strongly preferred.
- Experience working with volunteers and with public agencies and public-private partnerships a plus.
- Exceptional ability to share botanical knowledge with and inspire members, donors, staff, volunteers, visitors, colleagues and the public, with sensitivity to their diverse levels of knowledge and experience.
- Ability to develop a multi-year vision for the Collections & Conservation Department in the context of overall institutional goals, and to establish and meet near-term priorities that will advance these goals and vision.
- Ability to work across organizational functions and shift easily between big picture thinking and technical and operational details.
- Ability to manage organizational change and bring clarity and cohesion to a dedicated staff team, including establishing clearly defined roles and responsibilities.
- Ability to assess current operations, identify needed improvements, and work with and support staff to make them happen.
- Demonstrated ability to communicate effectively, both orally and in writing.
- Collaborative management style.
- Willing to take hands-on approach when needed.
- Experience with production and plant retail preferred.

- Knowledge and understanding of budgeting for programs and retail.

ADDITIONAL EXPECTATIONS

- Must accommodate a flexible work schedule as needed, including evenings, early mornings, weekends, and occasional travel.
- Must be able to engage in a range of physical activity, including prolonged standing or sitting at a desk and computer, walking (sometimes on uneven surfaces) and working outside in varying weather conditions – all for extended periods of time. Must also be able to climb a flight of stairs and lift/carry objects up to 30 pounds.
- Must work at least 3 days a week onsite, up to 2 days a week may be remote if the work schedule allows, but a regular onsite presence is essential for collaboration and success in this role.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND TO APPLY: Deadline for applications is June 25, 2025.

Complete application with attached cover letter at

<https://recruiting.paylocity.com/recruiting/jobs/All/99885d66-fdde-45ea-b169-b55cfb505be0/Gardens-of-Golden-Gate-Park>

Gardens of Golden Gate Park is an equal opportunity employer and encourages candidates with diverse backgrounds and experiences to apply.

We are an Equal Opportunity Employer. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability, genetic information, or any other category protected by law.

