

Volunteer Sensory Guide: Volunteer Role Description

Volunteer guides introduce visitors to the special qualities of the arboretum by sharing their passion for this world-famous collection of trees and are key in promoting the value of the arboretum as an internationally important scientific resource, learning destination, and a place to enjoy.

The Sensory Guides will collaborate with us to adapt our guide training programme and co-create and deliver multi-sensory tours for our visitors, focussing on some of the non-visual pleasures and treasures of the arboretum experience. The role will also give an opportunity to become part of the wider volunteer Guide team, and learn about the arboretum's heritage and historical context, its scientific significance and how

this Grade 1 listed landscape is managed and cared for today. No pre-existing knowledge about trees or Westonbirt is required; all you need is a love of woods, trees and nature, and lots of enthusiasm!

Please note we are looking for people who have lived experience of visual impairment and in particular practical use of non-visual senses for mobility and day-to-day activities.

When

- This role will commence when Covid restrictions allow.
- We will invite you to develop through a training programme, practise and deliver an initial 'Sensing Nature' tour of the arboretum.

- Different types of walks then run throughout the year March-October; walks last about 1½ hours.
- As part of our broader guided walk programme, we ask for 2 walks per month, this may rise during the autumn season when our visitor numbers peak.

What's Involved

- Leading parties of visitors safely around the arboretum, alongside a sighted assistant.
- Providing visitors with a thought provoking, multi-sensory walk focusing on our key messages.
- Tailoring the walk to suit the specific preferences and needs of different people.
- Answering visitor questions or advising where they may obtain the information.

- Promoting Westonbirt and its events; promoting the Friends' Charity and membership.

NB. Once qualified as a guide there is the opportunity to complete further training to get involved with specialist themed walks (e.g. Flora walks, Behind the Scenes tours).

We'd like you to...

- Be confident in engaging and communicating with all kinds of visitors.
- Be able to speak effectively to groups of people, whilst being reliable, positive, patient, and keen to share your enthusiasm for the arboretum with others.
- Have good attention to detail, an interest in trees and nature, enthusiasm and a willingness to learn and promote our key messages.

- Be able to make sufficient time available during the period of training and subsequent learning to undertake ‘homework’, get to know the arboretum and keep up to date with a continuously changing environment.

We will...

- Work together to develop your skills as a guide through a collaborative volunteer programme, exact timing tbc pending COVID-19 restrictions.

Please note, training is mandatory for this position and we do require trainees to attend all 5 training sessions.

- Support you in becoming familiar with the arboretum terrain, which can be uneven, rough or muddy. You will be walking on and off mainly level paths

through the seasons, therefore sturdy boots/shoes are needed.

- Provide you with an on-site radio for communication.
- Invite you to team meetings held four times per year (Covid-19 pending) which include on-going training. We expect you to be able to attend at least 2 out of 4 of these to maintain training.
- Provide access to Westonbirt's library and archive resources for further research.
- Pay a contribution to the cost of volunteering travel, details on enquiry.

If you would like to volunteer with a friend, family member or personal assistant, we will also welcome them to the team in a volunteer assistant role. Alternatively, we can identify one of our existing volunteers to

provide assistance on site, who will be trained in sighted guiding and work with you during the volunteer training and walks programme.

If you are interested...

Please do drop us an email by **31/03/2021** to arrange a time for an initial chat about the role opportunity:

volunteer.westonbirt@forestryengland.uk