Garden Buddy Programme Lead

Ninewells Community Garden, Dundee

Job details

Job title	Garden Buddy Programme Lead
Hours	34 hours per week, including occasional evening or weekend work
Contract	Fixed term for the three-year grant period, funded by The National Lottery Community Fund, with a six-month probationary period
Salary	£30,000 per year (34 hours per week), plus workplace pension
Location	Ninewells Community Garden, Dundee
Reports to	A named Trustee
Works with	Volunteers and garden buddies; sessional workers and workshop facilitators; independent session providers; Trustees and subgroups; local health and care partners
Checks	PVG Scheme membership for this post (see below), plus references

About the role

Ninewells Community Garden is an award-winning community garden, open to everyone, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It sits within and next to communities in some of Dundee's most deprived areas. For over 13 years it has offered people a welcoming outdoor place to grow, learn, meet others and improve their wellbeing and their connection to nature.

With National Lottery Community Fund support, the garden is launching a three-year Garden Buddy Programme. The postholder will have leadership responsibility for recruiting, training and retaining volunteers and developing some volunteers into buddies to support and train further volunteers. Trained volunteer buddies, will help newcomers settle in, take part and keep coming back. Over three years, the aim is a peer-supported, community-led garden in which buddies lead most routine sessions.

This is a hands-on role for an experienced gardener who enjoys working with people. You will spend most of your time outdoors with participants, volunteers and buddies, and you will also lead the garden's data collection, recording systems, shared drive and communications, with support from the Trustees.

Purpose of the post

To care for the garden alongside volunteers and to lead the Garden Buddy Programme, so that people who feel excluded, out of work, isolated or rehabilitating feel welcome, build skills and confidence, and develop a lasting connection to nature and to each other. The postholder will have leadership responsibility for recruiting, training and retaining volunteers and developing some volunteers into buddies to support and train further volunteers.

The Garden Buddy Programme will be open to adults of all ages and backgrounds who experience health inequalities, social or economic disadvantage, isolation, poor mental health, reduced mobility, learning barriers, or limited access to quality green space.

What the programme aims to achieve

The post holder is responsible for working towards the following three-year targets:

- Train 15 Garden Buddies
- Achieve 75% volunteer retention year on year
- Increase participant referrals by 20% by Year 3
- Have buddies leading 70% of routine sessions by Year 3
- Have 80% of volunteers report improved confidence, skills or wellbeing by the end of the programme

Main duties

1. Gardening and garden care

- Work with volunteers and buddies to maintain and grow the garden through the seasons, including food growing, composting, habitat care and wildlife monitoring.
- Help to develop the new permaculture forest garden, alongside the specialist trainer who supports it.
- Teach practical growing skills and keep tools, equipment and growing spaces safe and well maintained.
- Help to maintain the standards needed to retain the Green Flag Award and the Keep Scotland Beautiful Outstanding Level 5 Award.

2. Leading the Garden Buddy programme

- Create an educational programme and processes for volunteers working towards becoming a buddy
- Recruit, train and support buddies from the garden's volunteers and wider community, and create clear routes from volunteer to buddy and session leader.
- Liaise with a range of organisations to promote the garden volunteering & buddy programme.
- Match buddies with new volunteers, check in regularly with both, and make sure buddies understand the boundaries of their role.
- Run welcoming, accessible gardening sessions, gradually handing routine leadership to buddies while keeping oversight of quality and safety.
- Support volunteer wellbeing and development, and manage volunteer expenses within budget.

3. Workshops, partners and referrals

- Organise the monthly programme of specialist workshops (for example pruning, composting, food growing and biodiversity), delivering some and booking facilitators for others.
- Liaise with independent providers who use the garden (for example mindfulness, yoga and cooking sessions) about bookings, access and safeguarding and health and safety expectations. Delivery of these sessions sits with the provider.
- Receive and respond to referrals from social prescribing, healthcare and care services, and build links with NHS Tayside, local organisations and the Dundee Garden Network.
- Work with the Garden and Wildlife and the Fundraising and Events subgroups, and help promote the garden at events and open days.

4. Administration, data, communications and finance

- Under the direction of the Trustee Board, manage and develop the garden's data collection and recording systems: keep participation tracking accurate and up to date, collect surveys, volunteer self-assessments, case studies and testimonials, and keep data in line with data protection and consent requirements.
- Work with the University of Dundee evaluation support and the Trustees to make sure the information gathered matches what the funder needs.
- Produce regular summaries for Trustee meetings and contribute to interim and final funder reports.
- Manage the shared drive so that policies, volunteer information, newsletters and other records are organised, up to date and easy for Trustees and volunteers to find.
- Produce the garden's newsletter and look after its social media and website.
- Keep day-to-day financial records using the charity's agreed system, monitor spending against the programme budget, and flag any variances to the Treasurer promptly.
- Help to gather information for fundraising applications and reports.

5. Safeguarding, health and safety, and governance

- Follow the garden's safeguarding, confidentiality, data protection and health and safety policies, carry out risk assessments, and report concerns promptly to the named Trustee lead.
- Report regularly to your line manager and the Trustees, and attend team, Trustee and subgroup meetings as needed.

6. Other duties

- Take part in induction, supervision and training.
- Take on other reasonable duties in line with the post. The balance of duties will develop over time, with training and support provided.

Working pattern

The post is 34 hours per week, with the pattern agreed with the line manager. Workshops, open days, events and some sessions may take place in the evening or at weekends, so some flexibility is needed. Most work is outdoors, in all weather.

Support provided

- A named Trustee as line manager, with regular supervision
- A training budget, including finance system, data protection and safeguarding training
- Evaluation support from the University of Dundee in each year of the programme
- A specialist trainer for the forest garden
- Funding for workshop facilitators, sessional workers and volunteer expenses
- A six-month probationary period, with a review at the end of it

Person specification

	Essential	Desirable
Experience	A strong practical gardening or growing background; working with, motivating or leading volunteers; working with people from a wide range of backgrounds, including those who are excluded, out of work or rehabilitating, in a welcoming non-clinical setting	Community garden experience; social and therapeutic horticulture; running a volunteer, buddy or befriending scheme; managing grant-funded budgets; working with referral partners
Qualifications	A relevant horticultural qualification (for example SVQ or RHS) or equivalent practical experience	Training in mentoring or peer support; first aid; mental health awareness; food hygiene
Skills	Teaching practical skills to others; clear communication; organising a varied workload; strong IT skills, with experience of setting up and maintaining data collection and recording systems and managing shared drives (for example Google Drive or Microsoft 365); producing newsletters and managing social media; clear report writing	Designing simple evaluation tools; case study writing; using accounting software such as Xero or QuickBooks
Knowledge	Seasonal food growing and garden maintenance; awareness of safeguarding, health and safety and data protection	Permaculture or forest garden principles; wildlife-friendly gardening; social prescribing pathways; charity finance and funder reporting
Personal qualities	Warm, patient and inclusive; a real enthusiasm for working with volunteers, buddies and the wider community; reliable and organised; comfortable	Lived experience of the communities the garden serves

	Essential	Desirable
	handing responsibility to others; able to work independently with Trustee support	
Other	Willingness to work outdoors in all weather and some evenings or weekends; eligibility for PVG Scheme membership	

PVG Scheme

This post requires PVG Scheme membership. Applicants who already hold membership through other work will still need to be linked to Ninewells Community Garden for this specific post through Disclosure Scotland, and appointment is conditional on this.

How to apply

The closing date for applications is 14th December

Interviews are scheduled for the week of the 11th January

Application form, job description and person spec is available by emailing admin@ninewellsgarden.org.uk

Ninewells Community Garden is an equal opportunities employer. We welcome applications from suitably qualified people regardless of background or personal characteristics.