

Dear Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour Hosts,

Thank you for volunteering your time, and offering your expertise, to this year's Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour! I know it takes a lot of time and effort to get your garden ready, make the plant labels, and meet with your volunteers. I admire your willingness to share your knowledge and enthusiasm about gardening with native plants, for wildlife, without pesticides; and while conserving water. Your efforts will inspire a lot of people. It is a pleasure to get to work with you to help bring about positive environmental change. I bow to you across my keyboard.

Please review the Letter of Agreement

You might want to read over the Letter of Agreement (above) again, to be sure you know what your responsibilities are. More detail on some of the items in the Letter of Agreement is provided below.

Volunteers

Some general information on volunteering is [here](#).

Volunteer shifts are:

- 9:30 to 5:00 (if you have a very good friend who will volunteer all day), or
- 9:30 to 1:30 for the morning shift, or
- 1:00 to 5:00 for the afternoon shift.

Hosts are asked to find their own volunteers—at least their Greeters. Between 150 and 200 volunteers are needed for each Tour, and this is more than I can rustle up.

Greeters don't need to know anything about native plants; they just need to be pleasant and take tickets. This means that family members, friends, colleagues, or neighbors might be able to help out. You can also post your request for volunteers on the [Native Plant Resource Team](#) list-serve (it's free to join and free to attend our events!). With rare exceptions, all Tour hosts will need a morning and an afternoon Greeter.

Garden Assistants - Most of you will also need Garden Assistants. Garden Assistants do need to be familiar with native plants and able to answer questions about them. If you can't find Garden Assistants (which is understandable), let me know, and I will try to find some for you. But do recruit your own Garden Assistants you are in touch with people who are knowledgeable about native plants.

The number of volunteers needed for your garden - The email that contained your draft garden description listed the number of volunteers needed for your garden. It would be helpful if you would find that email and see what your volunteer allocation is. (If you can't find that garden description email that

contains your volunteer information, feel free to ask me, to let you know how many t-shirts I have ordered for your volunteers.) Please note that you are welcome to invite additional friends over to help out on the day of the event, but the Tour will only be providing t-shirts for the number of volunteers listed in the email that contained your draft garden description.

How do my volunteers sign up for my garden? Registration opens in February or March. Volunteers can sign up to help out at your garden when registration opens. On the registration form they will click, "I'd like to volunteer" and a pop-up will appear. They should write, "I am a friend of XX, and only want to be assigned to that garden."

When should my volunteers sign up for my garden? Please ask your volunteers to register by the end of March, and earlier if possible. By the end of March I need to know which hosts have lined up all of the volunteers they require, and which hosts need me to try and find volunteers for their gardens.

On April 1st I start assigning volunteers from the pool to hosts who need volunteers.

It is really a hassle when I have assigned a volunteer from the pool to a garden, and have introduced the volunteers to their host, and find out afterward that the host has already lined their volunteers up and I have to undo that work. So please, line up your volunteers early, and ask them to register, so I know whether or not you are all set, or need volunteers from the pool.

In addition, in early April a troop of volunteers and I custom pack the bags that go out to each garden - which contain the t-shirts for your volunteers. It's a hassle to have to swap t-shirts out after the bags have been packed, so please line your volunteers up early, and have them register by March.

Do volunteers need to register? Can I just send you their names?

Yes, volunteers do need to register, and no, it doesn't work for you to just send me their names. When a volunteer registers, s/he provides me with all of the information I need—their name, phone number, t-shirt size if they need one—or a note that they already have a t-shirt if they don't—their shift (morning or afternoon), and the position they are filling; Greeter or Garden Assistant.

Then, because they have registered as a volunteer that person is tagged in the database as a volunteer. Close to the Tour they will be sent a reminder to read the instructions for their position, and a request that they be responsive when you are setting up a time to meet with them prior to the Tour.

After the Tour I'll email each volunteer a thank you note, the quotes that visitor's made about the garden they staffed, and the final report.

If I find you volunteers about two weeks before the Tour I'll send you and your

volunteers a “Volunteers Meet Your Host” email, which will e-introduce you to the folks who will be helping you on the day of the Tour.

Before the Tour please contact your volunteers and set up the pre-tour meeting. I have found that when hosts don’t contact their volunteers before the event the volunteers are more likely to fail to show up on the day of the Tour. At this meeting the volunteers can put a face to your name, figure out where they will park (this should be some distance away), tour your garden (especially if they are Garden Assistants, so they can be of the most help to you), pick up their t-shirts, and so on.

What will my Greeter and Garden Assistants do?

Instructions for your Greeters and Garden Assistants, and also for the Electrification Assistants, if you have them are in separate files below. It would be helpful if you would print out the instructions for your Greeters and have them at the Greeting table on the day of the Tour, in case your volunteers need a refresher on what s/he should be doing.

Tickets

Hosts - if you would review with your Greeters the importance of their collecting a ticket from every adult who comes into your garden I would be grateful. The number of garden visits is reported to funders, and it's important to have an accurate count.

This year there is no printed garden guide, so registrants are asked to print and bring their own tickets. Some people will forget to bring their tickets. Some folks don’t have printers (though I don’t know how they manage!). People without tickets are welcome. Your neighbors who drop in are welcome.

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*Please put out a pair of scissors and some blank sheets of paper or several copies of the ticket page, so folks who need them can make their own tickets). Your Greeters should ask every adult who does not have tickets to cut out the tickets s/he needs, and then drop their tickets into the jar. If the registrant asks why, the Greeter can explain that we count the tickets to track the number of people entering a garden. I know that waving a phone to show a ticket works at concerts - but not for this garden Tour: **GREETERS SHOULD NOT ACCEPT A WAVED PHONE AS PROOF OF REGISTRATION – EVERYONE NEEDS TO DROP A TICKET INTO THE JAR.***

The ticket file has been attached as a PDF.

Parking

Parking on your block will be tight on the day of the tour. Please ask your volunteers to park a block away and walk in, leaving the closer spaces for tour guests. Hosts, you might consider putting your cars in the garage, up the driveway, or parking them down the block so there is more parking out on the street near your home.

Information is available on the [Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour website](#) that Tour visitors might find helpful. You might point out to them that this includes:

1. Plant lists for every Tour garden is on the Tour's website, on each garden's page; visitors can print out the plant lists they would like to have.
2. Contact information for landscape designers that design or maintain tour gardens will be found under "Find a Designer."
3. Lists of nurseries that carry natives is under, "Find a Nursery."

T-shirts - Please wear your green Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour t-shirt on the day of the tour. Volunteer shirts are periwinkle blue.

Identify hazards - In advance of the tour identify hazards, and if it is necessary, make and post "Watch Your Step" or "This Area Not on Tour" or similar signs.

Plant lists You may wish to print a couple of your plant lists for your Greeting table or for your Garden Assistants. If you do, boldly mark these plant lists "Display Only," and perhaps put them in plastic sleeves, so they don't disappear. Laminating your plant lists, or taping them down, will also help to keep the lists on-site. *You might inform guests that plant lists for every garden can be downloaded from the tour website, from each Tour garden's page.*

Bathrooms Tour guests will not be allowed in your home. Please let your volunteers know where the nearest public restroom is so tour guests can be directed there for bathroom stops. If you do allow guests to use your bathroom, please ensure they are escorted into the house, and that the escort waits inside the house, and then escorts the guest out. I have never had a problem in the 20+ years the Tour has been running, and would like to keep this streak up.

Donations to the Tour While some registrants have donated to the Tour in advance, many have not. A "Donations Requested" sign with a Venmo link has been included in your host bag.

Please put the donations request sign near a clear vase or jar, salt the jar with a bill, and put it on your Greeting table. Donations made on the day of the tour—either in cash by through Venmo—are an important part of what keeps the Tour funded.

When the tour is over you can either put the donations in a baggy and bring it to the post-Tour materials drop off event, or you can write a check for the donation amount and mail it to 1718 Hillcrest Road, San Pablo, 94806. Checks should be made out to "Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour."

Garden tour signs On the morning of the Tour set your garden tour sign up in the front garden where it will be clearly visible from the street. **Please treat your sign gently! They are expensive, and must be used again in future years. Do**

not put any tape on the sign, draw arrows on it, or punch holes in it. Don't put the signs out prior to the day of the tour, to avoid risk of theft.

Volunteers Your morning volunteers should arrive at 9:30. Volunteers are willing to help you set up, so don't hesitate to ask them for assistance. During the day feel free to turn things over to your Garden Assistants so that you can have lunch, or sit down and take a break.

Evaluation and post-tour follow-up On the week-end of the tour a link to the evaluation will be e-mailed to you. I look forward to hearing how the tour went for you, and hope you will complete the Host evaluation.

Returning your materials At the end of the day you are welcome to check with your afternoon volunteers to see if any of them would be willing to return your sign, left-over handouts, and donations jar contents to me. These materials can be brought to my home in San Pablo (1718 Hillcrest Road) and left by the front door any time, or they can be brought to my home on the Saturday after the Tour. The date, time, and location of the Open Garden Event at Which Materials Can Be Returned will be emailed.

You are also welcome to return your materials any time the week after the Tour, as long as it is before Mother's Day which is the weekend after the Tour.

Please note that your materials must be returned by the weekend after the Tour, as everything is going to storage immediately afterward, and materials that are not returned by that week-end wind up sitting in my garage all year long, which my husband does not enjoy.

I'm happy to put you in touch with nearby hosts so you can work together to make returning the materials easier. Just let me know you'd like to be e-introduced to nearby hosts, so I can give you each other's contact information.

On the day of the tour you will need to provide:

- A table and chair for the Greeters.
- Basket, bowl, or jar for tickets to be placed in.
- Clear vase or jar (salted with a bill) for donations.
- Table for handouts

Greeter and Garden Assistant Responsibilities

These are covered in the attached files; please read them. It would be useful to ensure your volunteers have read them also. It would be a good idea to review their responsibilities with them during your pre-Tour meeting.

Problems?

I will be touring the gardens myself on the weekend of the garden tour. To tell you the truth, there isn't much I can do on the day of the event if something does go wrong but if you would reach me, you can call my cell phone at (510) 761-7048, or you can reach me on my husband's cell phone at (510) 932-4021.

Should a visitor need more information or have a problem, s/he can call me at home on my landline on Monday at (510) 236-9558.

Thank you again for your help with this year's Tour. I hope you have a great Tour day!

Warmly,

Kathy Kramer
Garden Tour Coordinator