

Western Hills GARDEN

JOB OPPORTUNITY HORTICULTURAL MANAGER

February 2024

Organizational Overview: Founded in 1959, Western Hills Garden is a three-acre property in Occidental, CA with a critically important collection of rare plants and trees from around the world. It was transformed from a pastureland dotted with a few redwoods into a unique example of cultivated biodiversity by Lester Hawkins and Marshall Olbrich. Over their 30+ year tenure they became experts in garden design and horticulture, and inspired new ways of thinking about gardening on the West Coast. More recent owners (Maggie Wych/Chris & Tim Szybalski) made critical improvements that extended and enhanced WHG's legacy. In September 2021, Hadley Dynak and Kent Strader purchased the garden with the intention to run it as a nonprofit and community resource. Their mission is to link people, plants, and place with possibility. Stated strategic goals are to preserve the collection, increase the public's access, and create unique onsite experiences through programming and partnerships.

The Collection: The garden includes diverse collections of plants from around the world as well as some natives. WHG is pesticide free with a goal to expand native and low-water plant collections as well as to enhance sustainability practices.

The Position: The owners are looking to hire a horticultural manager who is passionate, enthusiastic, and knowledgeable about plants and gardens. Someone who appreciates the significance of this particular property and who wants to be part of expanding its reputation as a destination. This role is a full-time salaried position, reports to the owners, and is their first leadership hire. It will require high standards of horticultural maintenance, record keeping, leadership, and risk management.

DETAILED LIST OF DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Leadership

- Oversee all horticultural operations, including preservation and restoration within the garden and nursery.
- Work with owners and staff to create an overall vision for the collection that enhances the visitor experience.
- Be the horticultural face for the garden.
- Manage, mentor, and collaborate with other members of the horticulture team including a part-time gardener, weekly volunteers, seasonal interns, and summer garden fellows.
- Work to position WHG as a destination garden and contributor to the public/botanical garden community, actively promoting Western Hills Garden regionally and nationally.
- Participate in fundraising and outreach events as necessary and represent the garden to existing and prospective donors.

Plant Collections Management

- Develop an annual collection management plan and operational budget.

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- Coordinate plant collections and propagation management including GIS mapping, record keeping, cyclical inventoring, labeling, etc.
- Facilitate the development of a Western Hills Plant Collections Policy and create a comprehensive plan for plant succession for the Garden.

Plant and Soil Health Maintenance

- Regularly assess and address the health and differing needs of the collections.
- Identify, oversee, and conduct routine pruning of plants in the collection, weeding of beds, relocating plants as necessary, planting new items, and/or completing maintenance projects.
- Develop and implement best practices for improving/maintaining plant and soil health, including integrated pest management techniques, compost teas/foliar sprays, etc.

Irrigation Management

- Assess the irrigation system. Suggest improvements that reflect best practices in irrigation management.
- Oversee irrigation repairs and changes and maintain related documentation.
- Periodically review and update irrigation controller schedules and track changes.
- Develop a map and schedule for areas needing supplemental hand watering.

Nursery/Propagation Oversight

- Coordinate and improve nursery activities and infrastructure aligned with best practices for propagation, display, and sales.
- Enhance the propagation and nursery pipeline.
- Support propagation volunteers - helping with plant identification, preparing cuttings, and employing propagation best practices.

Public Engagement/Guest Services

- Lead tours, make public presentations, and advise on horticultural programming.
- Interact with visitors and share information about the garden's history, collection, and vision.
- Help develop and implement a garden interpretive plan.
- Serve as the content expert on the WHG collections.

QUALIFICATIONS:

Seeking a highly-motivated, detail oriented, and skilled individual excited to be part of the team leading Western Hills Garden into the future. Flexibility, patience, collaboration, and comfort interacting with the public are important personal attributes. Knowledge of and experience with west coast climate, plants, and garden practices is highly desirable.

Education/Experience

A combination of at least five years hands-on experience in a garden setting (botanical, public, formal estate, or similar environment) combined with educational background within the broad field of horticulture.

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Horticultural Skills

- Advanced knowledge of all areas of garden maintenance operations: planting, collections management, botany, irrigation, weeding, fertilizing, hedging, pruning, mulching, soil improvement, composting, pest control, propagation, etc.
- Ability to safely operate and maintain all types of garden tools and equipment.
- Preference for an individual with knowledge and experience with horticultural display and interpretation.

Leadership Skills

- Minimum of 3 years of hands-on supervisory experience.
- Energetic and outcome-oriented self starter who can manage multiple projects and people and bring a creative approach to solving problems.
- Positive attitude and interest in working as part of a small, diverse organization.

Administrative Skills

- Ability to maintain good record-keeping and report on progress.
- Computer literacy with proficiency in MS Office and/or Google Office products.
- Experience with collections management and related systems such as IrisBG is ideal.

Physical Abilities

- Safely lift and carry up to 60 lbs and bend, squat, kneel, reach, walk, and prune for extended periods of time.
- Willingness and physical ability to work outdoors in a variety of weather conditions, ascend and descend ladders, operate a variety of hand and power tools, and occasionally conduct work around hazardous materials and equipment.
- Travel occasionally to other garden properties and public gardens symposiums and conferences.

Cultural Competencies

- Model this garden's view that unique backgrounds, beliefs, values, and worldviews are assets to the organization and broader community.
- Commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Spanish language skills are a strong plus.

SALARY

\$70-85k annual salary, commensurate with experience

Benefits: 15 days PTO + 7 paid holidays.

TO APPLY

Please email your resume and a cover letter explaining why this role is a good fit for you by April 1, 2024, 5pm PT.

Contact Info: Hadley Dynak, WHG Director // hello@westernhillsgarden.com