

# Western hills GARDEN

## 2023 Internship Opportunities

**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 pastureland and redwoods into an incredible example of cultivated biodiversity by Lester Hawkins and Marshall Olbrich. Over their 30+ year tenure they became experts in garden design and botany and inspired new ways of thinking about horticulture on the West Coast. The next two owners (Maggie Wych – owner for 17 years, and Chris and Tim Szybalski - owner for 11 years) steered the property forward making critical improvements that extended the property's legacy as a historic nursery.

In September 2021, Hadley Dynak and Kent Strader purchased the garden with the intention to run it as a nonprofit and community resource. Our strategic goals are to preserve the collection, increase the public's access, and create unique onsite experiences to connect people, plants, and place through programming and partnerships.

**The Collection:** The garden includes diverse collections of Australian, Asian, South African, and native plants, including some species that are severely threatened in the wild. Our garden has been pesticide-free for two years and we are working to expand our native and low-water plant collections.

**Internship Description:** Western Hills Garden is looking for plant-loving students interested in a hands-on internship in our historic garden as we work to preserve, restore, and transition the garden to more sustainable practices, and to expand programming for the public to enjoy this landmark space.

**Spring internship period:** February-May (January 5th submission deadline)

**Summer internship period:** June-August (April 15th submission deadline)

**Fall internship period:** September-December (July 15th submission deadline)

Internships are tailored to the needs and interests of individual students. School credit is available. Hours can be set based on availability – though Tuesday morning and Fridays are

preferable. The minimum commitment is 10 hours per week which for a 9 week internship = 2 credit hours. A stipend of \$18 per hour is offered. Students currently enrolled at Sonoma State University of Santa Rosa Junior College are eligible to apply.

Interns will receive hands-on experience to learn all aspects of garden operations and maintenance and to build related skills.

**Responsibilities may include:**

- **Propagation:** Assist with creating and carrying out short- and long-term propagation plans
- **Plant species identification and labeling:** Assist with building out and updating a database of existing plant species; create and maintain labels for known plants.
- **Plant maintenance:** Assist with pruning and healthy plant management as well as eradication of target invasive species.
- **Composting and mulching**
  - Make and apply compost tea, worm tea, seaweed fertilizer, and foliar sprays
  - Learn about various types of mulch & basic principles of mulching for soil health
- **Soil testing:** Sample different areas of the garden to gauge soil health and get an estimate of the plant-available concentrations of nutrients to determine fertilizer recommendations. Map areas that have been tested & record data.
- **Integrated Pest Management (IPM):** Identify and monitor any pest or pathogen problems and address with organic based solutions
- **Community Engagement:** Interact with the public through nursery sales, leading guided tours, and other outreach/programming activities.
- **Administrative support:** Assist with administrative tasks such as social media, content curation, fundraising, grant writing, and other marketing and development activities.

**Skills required:** An excitement to learn gardening through hands-on experience. Prior gardening experience is helpful but not necessary. Physical stamina is a must/ability to perform physical labor such as weeding/planting. We are looking for motivated, self-starters who can be comfortable occasionally working alone. Conversational Spanish is a plus.

**To Apply:** Please send an email to the address below expressing your interest in the internship, a brief summary of your background and experience, your resume, and why you think this internship is a good fit for you. The deadline to apply for a winter internship is January 5th. Selections will be made by January 30th.

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