

Curator of a Botanical Garden

Encyclopedia Article

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Curator of a Botanical Garden

The curator of a botanical garden is the person who oversees the operation of the entire facility. He or she is involved in all aspects, including collection, preservation, and education. The successful curator of a botanical garden will have the opportunity to develop major plant collections. Unique plant collections may be obtained through plant expeditions or by exchanges with other botanical institutions and collectors. Field collecting is encouraged and the curator must have travel flexibility. A curator will interact with a talented staff and will meet interesting colleagues from many perspectives.

Brian M. Lamb, a botanical specialist and the curator of the Alameda Botanical Gardens in Gibraltar, clears water lilies from a pond.

The curator is responsible for the maintenance, development, and control of all collections, including living collections and herbarium and spirit-preserved collections. The curator is also responsible for periodic review and maintenance of garden design in the context of an overall plan. Specific duties include:

- overseeing periodic review of live plants for damage or disease and general health, taking appropriate measures for improved health
- overseeing periodic inventories to assess losses as well as to guide new acquisitions
- overseeing periodic review of plant labels and making needed repairs or replacements
- maintaining databases for all plant **accessions**, preferably linking both preserved and living collections
- reviewing the development of the garden facilities both to assure the well-being of the collections and to plan for growth
- periodically reviewing the health of herbarium collections, guarding against damage by insects
- seeing that loans of **specimens** to and from institutions are handled in a professional manner
- periodically checking specimens preserved in spirits for loss of fluid, topping vials when necessary
- interacting with the garden director and administrative staff to assure adequate staffing and resources for collections management.

The curator is expected to work among both spirit- and herbarium-pre-served specimens as well as inside greenhouses and on the grounds and should be able to lift fifty pounds.

The successful curator must demonstrate a love of living plants, plant collections, and people, as well as have expertise in living and preserved collections management. Computer skills in database management, word processing, and grounds collections management through computer-aided programs are required. A master's degree in the

organismal plant sciences is preferred, with emphasis on both botany and horticulture. Salary range is commensurate with experience. Salary advancement is accomplishment-based with annual reviews.

See Also

Botanical Gardens and Arboreta; Curator of an Herbarium; Herbaria.