



HANDS FOR NATURE:

A Volunteer Management Handbook



 *Part of the Tool Shed Series*



Made possible by

THE ONTARIO
TRILLIUM
FOUNDATION



LA FONDATION
TRILLIUM
DE L'ONTARIO

Published by Evergreen

Evergreen is a national non-profit environmental organization with a mandate to bring nature to our cities through naturalization projects. Evergreen motivates people to create and sustain healthy, natural outdoor spaces and gives them the practical tools to be successful through its three core programs: Learning Grounds (transforming school grounds), Common Grounds (protecting and preserving public open spaces) and Home Grounds (for the home landscape). We believe that local stewardship creates vibrant neighbourhoods, a healthy natural environment and a sustainable society for all.

Credits:

Project Manager: Samara Newman, Writers: Lucie Lavoie, Samara Newman, Research: Clément Farmer, Editor: Seana Irvine, Reviewers: Debby Morton, Joanne Henderson, Karen Whitehorn, Eva Pathak, Marena Brinkhurst, Graphic Design: Ariel Estulin, Printing: Sunview Press.

Thank you to the staff at Evergreen, Annabelle Mills, Jane Fletcher and the many other individuals who shared the successes and challenges of their volunteer experiences.

Upper cover photograph: Humber Valley Village Jr. Middle School, Cam Collyer

Lower cover photograph: Stewart Chisholm

Copyright © 2003 Evergreen. All rights reserved. Reproductions of small portions of this book for educational purposes is permitted and encouraged, provided appropriate acknowledgement is given.

National Library of Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Hands for nature: a volunteer management handbook.

ISBN 0-9732124-3-8

1. Voluntarism—Management.
2. Volunteer workers in conservation of natural resources.
I. Evergreen (Association)

S944.5.V64H35 2003

361.3'7'0683

C2003-902401-6

Printed on 100% post-consumer waste paper that is processed chlorine free (PCF), acid free and with environmentally sound dyes.



Catherine Goetz

HANDS FOR NATURE: A Volunteer Management Handbook

① WORKING WITH VOLUNTEERS	<u>4</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. Make sure you have a project plan</i> <i>2. Set up your system for working with volunteers</i> <i>3. Determining and communicating needs</i> 	
② RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS	<u>9</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. Before you begin to recruit</i> <i>2. Identify your target groups</i> <i>3. Target your recruitment by...</i> <i>4. Communicating with your target</i> <i>5. When volunteers step in the door</i> 	
③ RETAINING AND SUPPORTING YOUR VOLUNTEERS	<u>20</u>
<i>Keep volunteers coming back</i>	
④ PREVENTING VOLUNTEER BURNOUT	<u>25</u>
<i>Tips to Prevent Volunteer Burnout</i>	
⑤ RECOGNIZING YOUR VOLUNTEERS	<u>30</u>
<i>Tips on recognizing your volunteers:</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. Recognize your volunteers or else...</i> <i>2. Use a variety of methods to say "thanks"</i> <i>3. Recognize frequently</i> <i>4. Make recognition match motivation</i> <i>5. Other things to consider about volunteer recognition</i> 	
⑥ MOTIVATING YOUR VOLUNTEERS THROUGH THE MAINTENANCE SEASON	<u>38</u>
<i>Motivating your volunteers throughout the seasons</i>	
<i>Planning and implementing maintenance activities</i>	
<i>Other helpful considerations of successful maintenance events</i>	
REFERENCES AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES	<u>43</u>

HANDS FOR NATURE:

A VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT HANDBOOK



Volunteers play an essential role in bringing nature back into our communities. Every day, new greening projects are springing up on school grounds and public park lands across the country. These greening projects include wildflower and food gardens, using native plant landscaping around a community center, restoring a local wetland or habitat area.

The volunteers driving these initiatives are typically parents, teachers, community members, and members of local organizations, churches and schools. All are dedicated to improving the physical and natural health of the places they call home and they are committed individuals who take time out of their day – many while balancing jobs and other commitments – to participate as the fundraisers, planters, researchers or administrators of these projects.

Often, staff from non-profit organizations, conservation authorities, local municipalities and school boards coordinate volunteer efforts around the common goal of bringing nature back into their communities. In many cases, volunteers themselves act as volunteer coordinators. These individuals have the responsibility of ensuring that volunteers are fulfilled, motivated and rewarded by their involvement. The result is volunteers who remain involved and continue to support these initiatives.

Most groups engaging volunteers know that they would be more effective if they could make better use of their volunteers. Managing volunteers involved in community greening projects is not effortless but with some initiative, creativity and dedication, an effective and rewarding volunteer experience is well within reach, regardless of your available budget or resources.

To strengthen the volunteer management skills of volunteers and groups involved in Ontario's greening movement, a collaborative project of Evergreen, EcoSuperior and Sudbury Better Beginnings Better Futures was initiated in the Summer 2001. Called Hands for Nature, the project is funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation to support community greening volunteerism through training opportunities, resources, information sharing and promotion of good practices for working with volunteers.

To learn more about the successes and challenges of volunteer-driven projects, Hands for Nature conducted a province-wide survey of volunteers and volunteer coordinators involved in green space projects.

This booklet provides practical tips and ideas for working effectively with volunteers to create and sustain greening projects and includes many insights and helpful statistics from the Community Greening Volunteerism 2002 Survey as well as generous input and discussions with experienced volunteer coordinators and greening participants.

Hands for Nature: A Volunteer Management Handbook includes 5 chapters covering the essentials of good volunteer management:

- ① **WORKING WITH VOLUNTEERS**
- ② **RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS**
- ③ **RETAINING AND SUPPORTING YOUR VOLUNTEERS**
- ④ **PREVENTING VOLUNTEER BURNOUT**
- ⑤ **RECOGNIZING YOUR VOLUNTEERS**



This last chapter provides specific tips and strategies for dealing with a common challenge of volunteer-driven greening projects.

- ⑥ **MOTIVATING YOUR VOLUNTEERS THROUGH THE MAINTENANCE SEASON**





WORKING with **VOLUNTEERS**

// It's one thing to know that your organization needs additional help and that volunteers are the likely source. It's quite another thing to figure out how to best involve volunteers. //

McClintock, Norah. *Volunteering Numbers*

1

1

Managing volunteers in your naturalization project involves designing volunteer positions, recruiting individuals with the necessary skills, screening, providing training and recognizing volunteer efforts. Establishing a volunteer management system does take time and effort, however the rewards of a positive volunteer experience for all involved – including the coordinator – largely outweigh the effort in planning and managing the system.

Whether you're establishing a volunteer-run project for the first time or overhauling your current volunteer program, the following tips will help you to work effectively with volunteers.

1. MAKE SURE YOU HAVE A PROJECT PLAN

Having a plan in place for your naturalization, restoration or garden project is vital to successfully engaging volunteers. A written project plan that clearly outlines your goals, objectives and a prioritized task list will enable you to generate the support you need and focus volunteer efforts. It's best to have a project plan in place before you begin recruiting and working with volunteers. Even if you're re-working your volunteer program, it's never too late to stop and create or revisit and update your project plan. Having the plan in writing makes it easy to review the goals and objectives when meeting with new volunteers and ensures that you have the information you'll need to include in fundraising proposals and promotional information.

SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN DEVELOPING YOUR PROJECT PLAN:

* For steps and guidelines on school ground naturalization and community restoration check out Evergreen's *"All Hands in the Dirt"* and *"No Plot is too Small"*.

- ☛ What do you want to do?
- ☛ Why is this important?
- ☛ When will you do it? (timeline)
- ☛ Who will do the work?
- ☛ Who are the stakeholders?
- ☛ Who you are accountable to?
- ☛ Do you have the necessary support to begin involving volunteers?
- ☛ Will you need to fundraise for your project?
- ☛ Do you need to incorporate?
- ☛ Will you need a charitable registration number for fundraising?
- ☛ What safety and liability issues are relevant for your project/property?
 - Are security checks of your volunteers required? (Sometimes security checks are required for working with children.)
 - Will you have to provide transportation for volunteers?

1

2. SET UP YOUR SYSTEM FOR WORKING WITH VOLUNTEERS

Knowing what you currently have in place, or need to put in place to effectively manage volunteers, pays off. Consider the following when planning your system for working with volunteers.



Joshua Berson

WHO WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT?

Often, when people are planning their greening project, they identify individuals responsible for the event coordination, fundraising, plant selection, etc. But the core and essential task of coordinating and motivating these and other volunteers goes unrecognized and unfulfilled. Having at least

one person focused on managing your project volunteers is not a luxury but rather a necessity. The volunteer coordinator is one of the first positions that should be filled to help build momentum and ultimately sustain volunteer interest. The role of volunteer coordinator can be held by a staff member. Often this role is filled by a volunteer.

DO YOU HAVE A CONTACT PERSON?

It's important to have at least one person whose name, phone number and/or email can be given out as a point person for developing your initial project team, recruiting volunteers, creating partnerships, fundraising, etc. This may be the person responsible for volunteer management or another committee or staff member supporting the project.

HOW WILL YOU KEEP TRACK OF VOLUNTEER INFORMATION?

Whether it's a paper trail, a series of Excel spreadsheets, or a data base, record keeping is critical to your success. Consider all of the information that is necessary for following up with individuals who show an interest in volunteering: name, address, phone number(s), areas of interest, skills to offer, hours of availability, emergency contacts, etc. The more organized and accessible your volunteer information is, the easier it is for the group

1

to share the tasks involved in managing volunteers and delegate appropriate tasks.

Having ready-made forms for volunteers to fill out can be a helpful way of record keeping. Make use of event registration and regular sign-in forms, logs to track volunteer hours and volunteer information forms to collect information about volunteer interests and experience.

3. DETERMINING AND COMMUNICATING NEEDS

Before you get going, consider your needs and expectations, what volunteers can expect if they get involved: Think about how you will communicate these and other aspects of the project.

BE PREPARED TO COMMUNICATE...

THE PROJECT

Prepare a simple information package on your organization or project that provides details of the project plan and includes some information about the school or community that is leading it. You'll want to have this information on hand to distribute to community groups, the media and any outlets where you might find potential volunteers. This information will also be useful

when you are doing orientation and training sessions with new volunteers and fundraising for your project.

HOW OTHERS CAN GET INVOLVED

Recruitment flyers, newsletters and notices to parents and community members are helpful tools that communicate how people can join the project. Word of mouth is typically the most effective vehicle for encouraging people to get involved so don't be shy about spreading the word – it will spread. And the



Eliza Mitchell

better organized you are for responding to volunteer inquiries, the more likely people will stick around.

1



YOUR EXPECTATIONS

What is expected of your volunteers? Think about the specific skills you're looking for, how much time is required and when. Knowing this will help you give your volunteers clear directions. Short job



descriptions are very useful for communicating expectations for specific volunteer roles. The clearer you are, the more productive and committed your volunteers will be.

THE BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATING

Consider why volunteers would want to become involved. Simply put, what do they gain from their involvement? New skills, friendships,

a stronger sense of community, a real contribution to the environment – these are some of the rewards of volunteering.

Be sure to emphasize the benefits of volunteering and of the project in your recruitment flyers, letters to parents and community members, through the media, etc. People are attracted to a positive message – appeal to this sense.

YOUR APPRECIATION

Communicating your appreciation through regular feedback, recognition and personal thanks is crucial. An open honest environment between organizers and volunteers is a must to ensure a rewarding experience for all.



Catherine Goetz



RECRUITING **VOLUNTEERS**

“ Successful recruitment is getting the right person in the right job with the right skills at the right time. ”

Fel, Lyn. *Getting Started – Establishing a volunteer program*



2



2

Engaging enough volunteers to share all the work that needs to be done is a common challenge and often the same few people are doing the bulk of the work. This isn't surprising when you consider that 73% of the total number of volunteer hours contributed in Canada is donated by less than 7% of all Canadians. McKeown. *Volunteering in Canada*

Sometimes, even when there are people knocking on the door to participate, groups struggle with finding work to fit volunteer needs and interests. At the same time, they push on without the volunteer support they need in other project areas. Having a recruitment plan in place means not waiting for volunteers to walk in the door and offer to help, but rather going out and actively seeking volunteer help for areas of the project that require support.

Knowing how to reach and engage the right volunteers is important for establishing a consistent volunteer team and will help you meet the needs of your project during its various stages. Following the steps outlined in this chapter will help you recruit the right volunteers for your project.

1. BEFORE YOU BEGIN TO RECRUIT

KNOW WHAT YOU NEED YOUR VOLUNTEERS TO DO.

Consider your organization and project carefully to determine what skills you require of your volunteers, and when. Your recruitment techniques will be very different if you are looking for a large group of people to help plant trees than if you need one person to help write funding applications. Think about the skills and roles your project requires rather than what volunteers can offer your project. While you'll need to be flexible to match skills and interests, try not to tailor tasks to fit the specific skills of volunteers – in the long run, this could set you off strategy and consume valuable time.

Develop job descriptions for your volunteer positions. This will make it clear what you expect your volunteers to do, whether you are looking for special skills and experience, and how much time you require of your volunteers. Having job descriptions will also mean you'll be able to give volunteers work to do as soon as you've identified that there is a match between their skills and your project's needs.

2



Cam Collyer

If someone offers to volunteer for your organization or project, they most likely want to get involved in a project right away. The longer you take to get back to them, the more likely they are to lose interest and perhaps volunteer elsewhere. There are many volunteer management resources to help you develop volunteer job descriptions.

For a comprehensive list of resources, see *A Guide to Volunteer Program Management Resources* published by Volunteer Canada (www.volunteer.ca).

DESIGN VOLUNTEER POSITIONS FOR VARYING LEVELS OF RESPONSIBILITY, COMMITMENT AND EXPERIENCE.

A typical naturalization project has three levels of involvement, with each level providing different roles and requiring different experience, and for volunteers,

varying degrees of commitment. A community or school ground project often requires a small number of decision makers to sit on an organizing committee and a larger number of volunteers who will attend and manage regular activities such as organizing plantings and leading the fundraising. A much larger number of volunteers may be required regularly during certain seasons to lend a hand at planting and stewardship events.

Design a greater number of jobs requiring short, concentrated effort with a definite end point, a smaller number of positions with more involved, coordinating responsibilities and much fewer positions with ongoing but less time-consuming responsibilities. You will likely need to recruit differently for the various types of roles. The recruitment techniques discussed in this chapter, which are appropriate for recruiting coordinators and planters, may not work for recruiting board or committee members.

For more information on recruiting decision-makers for your board or committee, read *Board Building: Recruiting and Developing Effective Board Members for Not-for-Profit Organizations*. Part of the Board Development Workbook Series published by the Muttart Foundation and Alberta Community Development. Available to download at www.cd.gov.ab.ca.

2

According to our Community Greening Volunteerism Survey, 78% of greening volunteers give under 5 hours/week of time volunteering, while some donate 10-20 hours or more each week. 69% of Canadians who don't volunteer cited lack of time as the reason.

McClintock. *Quick tips for Volunteer Management*
Volunteer jobs need to be designed with the challenge of time management in mind.

✦ *If you have volunteer positions that require considerable commitment or seem too large or difficult, consider recruiting an entire group as a volunteer unit or several people to job share. For example, garden maintenance over the summer season can be time consuming, but recruiting members of a service group or a family to share the work will make it easier on everyone. If recruiting for a big job is not turning up results, separate the work into smaller roles and recruit for those.*

Be flexible with the positions that require greater responsibility and levels of expertise. Some volunteers will be reluctant to take on these roles so you may find that you need to

recruit for these positions in stages. For instance, if your volunteers are interested in advertising and promotion but apprehensive to take the lead role, build their confidence by recruiting them to design flyers and write media releases. When they have mastered these tasks, mentor them in the more difficult task of coordinating media strategies and serving as media contacts.

“An invitation to volunteer is a strand in the thread that connects. A program that says ‘Welcome’ in every way, over the phone, in person, or in the mail, invites a volunteer to be a part. Volunteers who feel they belong, return.” Elliston, Sarah. As quoted in *Volunteer Management: Mobilizing all the Resources of the Community*

2. IDENTIFY YOUR TARGET GROUPS

Once you know the types of volunteer roles that need to be filled, you'll need to find the volunteers that have the necessary skills, experience and interest. It is helpful to

WHO VOLUNTEERS?

(McKeown. *Who are Canada's volunteer*)

People most likely to volunteer:

- ✦ are Canadians in their middle years (35-54)
- ✦ are women, however men will put in more hours
- ✦ have a university degree; volunteering increases with formal education
- ✦ are employed (67% of volunteers), but those who were not employed donated more hours
- ✦ are increasingly from the youth sector (15-24), who volunteered at rate above the national average. One in five youth are required to volunteer by their school, employer or the government.



identify groups of people that share a common characteristic, association or experience to target with your recruitment efforts. Identifying target groups for recruitment will help you tailor your efforts to the specific volunteer roles you're trying to fill. It's best not to rely heavily on only one target group when recruiting—branch out and try to involve volunteers from many different target groups.

3. TARGET YOUR RECRUITMENT BY...

ACTIVITY

When you need volunteers with special skills or experience, target your recruitment by the specific activity. Identify where you would typically find people with the skill sets you are looking for to accomplish that activity. Don't be afraid to invite people to participate even if you don't know them.

For example, if it's gardeners you need, target people that already garden on their own, such as members of gardening clubs, horticultural societies, shoppers at garden centers or green houses.

In addition to clubs and specialty stores, consider associations, special interest groups, universities, technical institutes and government organizations. For instance, the Home Builder's

Association could be your connection to someone with skills in carpentry or the botany or ecology department at the local university may be the place to find students interested in building their experience in plant identification.



Karen Rosborough

Consider recruiting individuals of varying ability levels. People with developmental and physical challenges are often interested and capable of participating in stewardship activities, such as weeding, watering, and much more.

Contact your local volunteer center, self help groups, social service agencies and other organizations that work on behalf of people with disabilities and let them know of your volunteer opportunities.

Check out Volunteer Canada's resource "*Volunteer Connections: Creating an accessible and inclusive environment*" for more information on involving people with disabilities.

2

AVAILABILITY

Many times there are no special skills required of your volunteers, just a willing attitude to help. Consider who would be available during the times you need help. Consider targeting seniors, retirees, stay at home parents and university students with flexible hours for volunteer needs that fall during business hours. In the summer, consider targeting local day camps that may be looking for an off-site activity.

*** New Canadians volunteer to get connected with their new community, to learn job skills, and gain experience before entering the work force. New Canadians often have greater availability and many are skilled professionals looking for a way to participate and develop their professional work experiences in Canada.*

LOCATION

People get involved with a project for many reasons and location is often one of them. Living down the street or owning a nearby business gives people an extra connection to the work being done and often makes a perfect fit for short but regular volunteer roles such as summer watering. Consider recruiting from neighboring residents, businesses and local places of worship to help out.

ASSOCIATION

Your project and the participants are the best promotion and recruitment tools around. Ask current participants to attend a 'bring-a-friend' event and recruit from the new faces. Having a connection with the project is a great reason to get and stay involved.

Rosethorn Junior School's recruitment flyer

Rosie's Rainbow Garden Family Fun Day Saturday, October 19th, 2002 (10:00 a.m. – noon)

What we have planned:

— Planting 25 new trees on the big berm — Pruning — Mulching

Each family member who comes will be entered into a draw for one of the above prizes. Please bring well- labeled shovels, forks, hoes, wheel barrows, etc.

Thank you so much on behalf of the trees and the environment!

Sincerely,
Rosie's Rainbow Garden Team

Please fill in the form by Tuesday October 15th to let us know if you will be able to attend!

My family will be able to attend Rosie's Rainbow Garden Family Fun Day.

Yes Number of people coming _____ No we will be unable to come

Student's name: _____ Student's class: _____

Come and win a prize from
Teddy's Toys, Trillium
Nurseries, Plant Central
and Bob's Grocery.

2



More than 50% of people who volunteer do so because they are asked to by a friend, co-worker or acquaintance.

McClintock. *Quick tips for Volunteer Management*

VOLUNTEER-FOCUSED PROGRAMMING

Groups that value and encourage their participants to volunteer as a way of earning badges or other accomplishments, can be a great target for volunteer recruitment. Many high school students are now required to complete a certain amount of community service in order to graduate. Local scouts, brownies and girl guide groups as well as non-profit youth-oriented groups can be of great help when many hands are needed. Many businesses support the volunteering efforts of their employees by allowing them time off or letting them modify their work schedule to make time to volunteer. Your local volunteer

center is a good way to connect with businesses interested in supporting and promoting volunteerism among their employees.

4. COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR TARGET

DEVELOP A RECRUITMENT MESSAGE

Your recruitment message communicates what your group can offer potential volunteers while appealing to their motivation to get involved with your project. Communicate what the volunteer will do, the skills and attributes that are necessary for the position, and the time commitment required. The recruitment message should also clearly describe how the work will benefit community members and other key stakeholders, as well as how the position will meet volunteer needs and interests.

VOLUNTEER RETENTION – RECRUITING FOR SUSTAINED SUPPORT

Sometimes how you recruit can influence your success in maintaining a consistent volunteer team in the long run. School ground projects, for example, are active over many years and sometimes become plagued by a stop and go pattern of activity as children graduate and their parent volunteers naturally move on.

The participants of the school ground naturalization project at Jackman Avenue Public School make a point of involving members of the surrounding community that are not otherwise connected to the school.

This helps create a consistent volunteer team and provides additional support during the summer months.

Many schools find success in the strong school/community bonds that can be developed by creating a 'culture of involvement' that engages new students and parents as soon as they join the school. Some school ground project coordinators spend time each year recruiting parents of kindergarten students. This helps ensure that the school ground elements are relevant and suitable to the younger students and more accessible for all potential teachers and parents.

2

SPEAK WITH POTENTIAL VOLUNTEERS FACE-TO-FACE

Nothing beats face-to-face contact when you're describing the value of the work being accomplished and inviting someone to participate. For instance, if you are involved with a school naturalization project, speak with parents at drop off and pick up times to invite them to get involved.

NETWORK, NETWORK, NETWORK

According to our Community Greening Volunteerism Survey, volunteers found networking through schools and community groups to be the best way to learn about volunteer positions and to recruit volunteer support.

✦ Think about any contacts you may have and look at them as paths to reach a greater audience.

✦ Attend meetings where you can reach a variety of individuals with different interests. Always have information on hand so you are able to give people details they can walk away with and share with others.

✦ Participate in community events and bring a display along to fairs, trade shows and other events. Increasing the exposure of your organization and project will give you a greater audience from which to recruit.

MAKE FULL USE OF ADVERTISING AND PUBLICITY

According to our Community Greening Volunteerism Survey, groups working on greening projects found promotional flyers and ads to be critical tools to their recruitment success.

USING MOTIVATION TO DESIGN RECRUITMENT MATERIALS

Appealing to the motivations of volunteers is a great way to get them involved. In order to meet volunteer needs, you first need to understand why people volunteer. According to our Community Greening Volunteerism Survey, the number one factor motivating volunteers to get involved in greenspace projects is "doing something to improve the environment". Other important motivating factors are the potential for "community connections" and "building employment relationships/experience". In the case of school ground

naturalization projects, parents are often motivated to improve the outdoor school experience for their children.

Appeal to the motivation to help the environment in your recruitment message. **For example "Is a healthy water supply important to you? Participate in a Credit River planting day and make a difference in your community."** This would be a rousing message to local environmentalists and others concerned about their community.

2



✦ *Your recruitment materials should be simple and succinctly address the what, where, why, who and how of the project. Offer added incentives such as the chance to receive training and learn new skills. Don't forget to include all relevant contact information.*

✦ *If possible, design a simple logo or add a design element to your existing logo that will identify your project. Participants appreciate being associated with something that is recognized by the community. The logo can be used for communication, advertising, volunteer awards or to display at a project event on a banner. Avoid issues of copyright violation by ensuring that you have permission to use any existing logos.*

✦ *Make full use of any free publicity, such as public service announcements, human-interest news articles and event listings.*

✦ *Contact traditional media outlets such as radio, television, newspapers and special interest publications.*

✦ *Sprinkle the billboards in your community liberally with posters, flyers and brochures. Think about where you can reach your target groups and consider restaurants, supermarket boards, libraries and local coffee shops that are heavily frequented.*

✦ *The Internet is an effective and inexpensive option for communicating and getting the word out about your project and volunteer opportunities.*



Joshua Berson

2

Evergreen's on-line project registry at www.evergreen.ca/en/registry.html is a great place to share information about your project, recognize accomplishments and participants as well as recruit volunteers.

Many web sites such as www.charityvillage.com and www.volunteer.ca provide online databanks where organizations can post volunteer opportunities within cities across Canada.

✦ Your project information package will help you in your promotion and recruitment efforts. It can be a useful information backgrounder for your media outreach and it can also be helpful for volunteers leading recruitment to answer questions if they are less familiar with the project.

CONTACT YOUR LOCAL VOLUNTEER CENTRE

Volunteer centres across the country offer a variety of services in response to the needs of each community. All centres will help connect volunteers to volunteer opportunities, and provide management consulting on volunteer programs, training and volunteer management resources.

Contact Volunteer Canada at www.volunteer.ca to find the volunteer centre near you.

5. WHEN VOLUNTEERS STEP IN THE DOOR

A NOTE ABOUT SCREENING:

Volunteer Canada provides helpful information about screening and risk associated with persons in positions of trust or authority on their website at www.volunteer.ca (choose screening from the fast find menu). Included in Volunteer Canada's 10-step screening process are the following three components of effective volunteer management:

INTERVIEW YOUR CANDIDATES

Besides getting to know a potential volunteer, the interview process is especially important if you are looking for special skills and experience. An interview can be as simple as a short chat to discuss your mutual expectations, to learn if



2

they have the right skills and experience, and to discuss the time commitment and goals of the arrangement.

PROVIDE AN ORIENTATION SESSION

An orientation session is a great way of welcoming your volunteers, providing basic information and helping them understand how your project works. Most importantly, an orientation session demonstrates to your volunteers that you respect them and their contribution. Introduce new volunteers to other volunteers and staff and make sure they know the basics of your site or office – where the washrooms are, refreshments, where they'll be sitting, etc. If you can arrange a site tour of your project, this will help to inspire your volunteers and ground the work they've signed up to help out with. A chance to review the project plan is also a helpful part of an orientation session.

TRAIN YOUR VOLUNTEERS

According to our Community Greening Volunteerism Survey, training is the most valued form of volunteer recognition. Training can also be promoted through your recruitment strategy as an added benefit of participation.

Training is essential if you want your volunteers to have the information and know-how to successfully complete their tasks. Gather volunteers together, clarify technique, and provide instructions so that no one wastes their time. Training is an opportunity for volunteers to meet each other, learn new skills or brush up on skills that have been unused.





RETAINING *and* **SUPPORTING** *your* **VOLUNTEERS**

“Experienced and committed volunteers are the essence of a project. Keeping volunteers interested and engaged is what makes a good project great.”

C. Scotchmer, Community Naturalization Coordinator



3



Active and committed volunteers are the key to success in any community greening project. Experienced volunteers are especially valuable because they already 'know the ropes'. They are familiar with the goals of your project, and can provide inspiration and leadership to new volunteers. With volunteers juggling their many priorities and demands on their time, it can be a challenge to keep a steady pool of individuals to help throughout the stages of your project.



Cam Collyer

So what can you do to keep your volunteers inspired and involved? Here are some ideas for retaining and supporting the heart of your project - your volunteers.

90% of groups across Ontario that responded to our Community Greening Volunteerism Survey indicated that volunteers were either 'crucial' or 'extremely crucial' to the work they do.



1. KEEP VOLUNTEERS COMING BACK

Volunteers get involved for many different reasons and they have a variety of needs with respect to their volunteer experience. Your volunteers will have an enriching work experience and your project will be more successful if you meet the needs of your volunteers. In order to this, here are some insights:

THE IMPACT OF THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS

Volunteers need to know that their contribution is making a difference. For example, parents helping to improve the quality of their children's outdoor time by naturalizing the school ground will appreciate seeing how their involvement is benefiting their children. A newsletter or garden update sent to parents is a great place to capture comments or quotes from students and teachers about how the gardens are affecting the school experience.

Consider communicating the environmental outcomes of your restoration effort by creating a photo record or documenting the number of species of birds or butterflies attracted by species planted by volunteers. Providing information on the outcomes of the project is a great way to keep your volunteers focused on both the tasks at hand and the big picture.

3

Collecting this information can be a creative classroom activity or additional volunteer project.

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

Foster opportunities for volunteers to meet one another and work collaboratively. Invite volunteers involved in different gardens or aspects of the project to take part in a garden tour so that they meet each other.



Cam Collyer

Connect volunteer contributions to the larger community through walks and educational events that help them see how their work on one project fits in with the work of other organizations or projects that are active in the community.

BUILDING PRIDE

Volunteers at the North Bay Heritage Garden are proud of their work. Because the Garden is in a highly visible location on the waterfront, people often express their delight with the gardens. The gardeners are passionate about their garden beds, and the compliments they receive increase their pride and motivation.

BUILDING EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIPS, EXPERIENCE AND LEARNING NEW SKILLS

According to Statistics Canada, 62% of volunteers thought volunteering would help them find employment. Our Community Greening Volunteerism survey supports this trend by revealing that “employment relationships and experience” is a key motivating factor for volunteers. Volunteers value learning for personal growth as well as professional development, so try to ensure that there are opportunities for learning in volunteer positions. Find out what interests volunteers, and provide learning and training opportunities. For instance, you can match up a volunteer who wants to learn how to identify native plants with those knowledgeable in plant identification. Provide volunteers with access to books, publications, and other resources, such as information on apprenticeships that can help build their knowledge.

3

A SENSE OF BELONGING

Do not take your volunteers for granted. Build a team environment that includes volunteers. Welcome them and treat them as you would paid staff. For example, if you are going out for coffee or lunch with your co-workers, make sure to ask the volunteers to join you.



Joshua Berson

“Treat volunteers as equal partners - don’t be condescending! Provide whatever comforts and benefits you can get for them.” Dr. J. Hamr, Northern Heritage Institute

FEELING VALUED AND RESPECTED

Providing a forum for volunteers’ ideas to be heard communicates that their experience and knowledge is valued, keeps volunteers feeling connected and empowered and can contribute

to achieving a more successful, realistic project. Where appropriate, ask a volunteer for their opinion and act on it. Provide a garden diary that remains on site for volunteers to record their comments and communicate with other volunteers and project coordinators. Provide volunteers performing regular stewardship roles with event forms to record the activities carried out and other activities that need to be undertaken. Work the suggested activities into the schedule or at the very least discuss why they feel there’s a need for the work.

Including volunteers on project committees is another way to offer volunteers a decision-making role. Show volunteers that you respect their time and efforts by being prepared for your volunteers when they arrive.

“Keep volunteers involved in the process. This means that they have a say and are a part of the decision-making as well as any actions that are required.”

Franco Mariotti, Science North

CHOOSING THEIR ROLE

Involving volunteers in deciding the role they will play empowers them to find a position that suits their interest, expectations and schedule. You may want to meet with your volunteers at the beginning of the project

3

with a detailed list of all the tasks that need to be done. Everyone can then set priorities and decide which task they would like to do.



Make volunteer jobs interesting. Give volunteers a great place to work, new experiences and try to keep the atmosphere inviting and inspiring for all. Remember, the volunteer experience needs to be rewarding for them – and for your project or organization.

BE FLEXIBLE WITH YOUR EXPECTATIONS

Being clear about your expectations right from the start is important, but expectations also need to be flexible. Recognize that a volunteer's needs and motivations change over time. Encourage volunteers to communicate with you about their volunteer experience and check-in often with your volunteers to discuss

why they are volunteering and if they are happy with their work. If they are dissatisfied, do something about it!

If the work doesn't meet your expectations or those of your volunteer, work together to find an activity that will meet both your needs. You may want to evaluate progress together periodically to discuss and plan for the tasks that lie ahead.





PREVENTING VOLUNTEER BURNOUT

“ Open communication, encouragement and fun are powerful tools for preventing burnout. ”

D. Morton, Volunteer Program Coordinator

4

4

It is normal to lose volunteers as they move to new places or on to new interests. However, if your project is losing key volunteers after they've contributed a great deal of time and effort or volunteers are moving through your project as if they were moving through a revolving door, you may be creating a 'burnout' situation. If you do find that your volunteers are experiencing burnout, you're not alone. Our Community Greening Volunteerism Survey confirmed that volunteer burnout is the most significant challenge facing community greening groups.

RECOGNIZING BURNOUT

Do your volunteers suffer from a persistent lack of energy and satisfaction? Are they short on enthusiasm and motivation? Is their interest flagging? Other symptoms of burnout include lack of concentration and humour, and decreased self-confidence. If you recognize these symptoms in yourself or in your volunteers, you could be suffering from burnout.

1. TIPS TO PREVENT VOLUNTEER BURNOUT

The following tips should help you ensure that your volunteers remain motivated and committed to your greening project.

ENSURE THAT GOALS ARE REALISTIC, RELEVANT AND ACHIEVABLE

Be realistic when you set goals and objectives. There is no quicker way of burning out volunteers than making them reach for an impossible target. It is a good idea to gather input from volunteers, perhaps through a survey, to provide a forum for suggestions and concerns to be communicated and dealt with as early as possible.

Members of boards or green space committees should periodically revisit the vision, mandate and workplan. Doing this regularly (i.e. when a new volunteer board member joins) will keep your eyes on your goals and ensure they are relevant to the interests and skills of participants.



4

KEEP THE WORKLOAD MANAGEABLE

Typically, there is too much work to be done by too few people, and often a small group of volunteers work too many hours trying to get everything done.

✦ *Revisit your project plan, expand timelines and re-evaluate the project size when necessary.*

✦ *Don't overwork volunteers! More hands make light work so recruit more volunteers to spread the work around if the workload is too great for your volunteer team*

✦ *Do not let one person take on too much. Teach volunteers in leadership roles how to delegate.*

GIVE VOLUNTEERS THE OPPORTUNITY TO SAY NO AND TAKE BREAKS FROM THE PROJECT

It is much better to have a volunteer temporarily step away or take a lesser role than to lose them altogether. Invite a hard

working volunteer to take a break to do something else or rest from their role with the project. They may appreciate the opportunity to have a change and return to the project more energized and inspired.

TAKE TIME OFF

Have the flexibility in your project plan to slow things down and put things on hold. Stagger 'big' project years with slow-paced years. The community at École Catholique Franco-Supérieur in Thunder Bay worked hard to establish a boreal forest area. The following year was a time of reflection and renewal during which the parent group recharged their batteries, while planning new projects and strategies to involve additional volunteers.

DO YOU KNOW SOMEONE SUFFERING FROM BURNOUT?**First Aid for Burnout Victims**

(Woloshuk and Eagan. *Beating Burnout*)

DO LESS

- ✦ Work fewer hours
- ✦ Make a list of your priorities and do the most important first
- ✦ Say 'no' and don't feel guilty about it

DELEGATE

- ✦ Other people may not do it exactly like you, but trust them to do a good job

EXERCISE

- ✦ Take a break, even if the day is busy

GET AWAY FROM IT ALL

- ✦ A vacation or weekend retreat can be really refreshing

SPEND MORE TIME WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS**TAKE TIME FOR YOURSELF****REST****HAVE FUN AND LAUGH ABOUT IT**

4

PROMOTE A SENSE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT

✦ Ask volunteers to participate in setting priorities so the most important tasks get accomplished first. This will help give volunteers a sense of accomplishment, even if only a small portion of the overall project is completed.

For example, if you are establishing a garden, consider dividing the work into a series of units such as soil preparation, transplanting and seeding. As one unit is completed, move on to the next task.

✦ Emphasize what has been accomplished over what still needs to be done. Piles of weeds and empty plant pots are a great way to see how much has been done, even if the site doesn't look radically altered.

✦ Process is important, but if your volunteers like to get their 'hands dirty', make sure they get the chance to dig in.

MANAGE VOLUNTEER TIME EFFICIENTLY

According to Statistics Canada, Canadians cite lack of time as the greatest barrier to volunteering. These findings were supported by our Community Greening Volunteerism survey that also indicated time restraints as the greatest challenge that greening volunteers face.

✦ Be prepared so that you don't waste people's time. For example, have your workday well planned to make efficient use of your volunteers. Have all of the tools you need set out at the work site and bring enough materials for everyone.

✦ Ensure that volunteers know exactly what is expected of them so they don't waste their time doing something that doesn't contribute to the end product.

✦ Tailor your volunteer jobs so that they can be readily started and accomplished in time allotments of one, two or three hours maximum. Most volunteers contribute less than five hours a week.

✦ Scheduling in advance allows volunteers to manage their time commitment.

✦ Build in extra time for training, questions and clean up at the end of events.

Laura Berman



MAKE THE VOLUNTEER WORK FUN

It's easy enough at times to feel overwhelmed with the challenges and workload associated with community greening and stewardship



projects, but try not to let this stress affect the quality of the volunteer experience. Volunteers are more apt to keep coming back if they enjoy what they're doing and whom they're doing it with.

✦ *Provide opportunities for volunteers to switch to different tasks that they find more enjoyable.*

✦ *Create a social network. Meet for coffee, potlucks and picnics. Celebrate volunteer*

birthdays. Build 'chat-time' into your volunteer activities and meetings.

✦ *Think about starting a project scrapbook to record the history of your project, comments, photographs of volunteers and events for each year. This can become a cherished memento for the project or organization and a source of pride for volunteers.*





RECOGNIZING YOUR VOLUNTEERS

“...the most important form of recognition is respect and a willingness to share both responsibility and authority with others.”

Allen, Ken. As quoted in *Volunteer Management: Mobilizing all the Resources of the Community*

5

5

TIPS ON RECOGNIZING YOUR VOLUNTEERS:

While participating in local environmental projects is certainly rewarding for its own merits, it is still important for participants to receive some recognition for their tremendous efforts. Recognition communicates that a volunteer is an equal, respected and valued member of the group and an important way of keeping your volunteers motivated. Volunteer recognition must be an integral part of the management process. This chapter will help you identify practical, easy ways of recognizing your volunteers that will help keep your project on track and your volunteers committed.

1. RECOGNIZE YOUR VOLUNTEERS OR *ELSE...*

A volunteer taken for granted quickly takes the road.

2. USE A VARIETY OF METHODS TO SAY "THANKS"

Volunteer parties and annual award ceremonies can be valuable ways of acknowledging the contributions of your volunteers. Don't just rely on an end of the year volunteer event to acknowledge your volunteers and their efforts; make it a daily habit. Consider using the following informal and formal ways to recognize your volunteers that are both inexpensive and effective.

INFORMAL RECOGNITION

- ☛ Share a cup of coffee and a chat together
- ☛ Phone just to thank them
- ☛ Help them network with other organizations
- ☛ Use them as a consultant or advisor = listen to their suggestions
- ☛ Document their time for future evaluation
- ☛ Provide informal positive feedback = encouragement
- ☛ At wildflower planting events let volunteers choose a plant to take home

FORMAL RECOGNITION

- ☛ Provide clear job descriptions and job titles
- ☛ Name an award after an outstanding volunteer
- ☛ Provide free tickets to events
- ☛ Celebrate anniversaries of volunteer's years with the project or organization
- ☛ Provide formal feedback such as evaluation and increased responsibility/promotion
- ☛ Provide skill building workshops

5

PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEADERSHIP, RESPONSIBILITY AND INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION-MAKING

There are lots of ways for volunteers to assume leadership roles and take on decision-making responsibilities. For example, when appropriate, invite a volunteer to an organizational meeting and ask for their input. Volunteers can also lead groups at planting events, coordinating and training other volunteers to plant, water and mulch. The level of responsibility will likely only be dependent on the abilities, interests and time commitments of the volunteer.

TRAINING

Providing training opportunities for your volunteers will help support them in their volunteer roles, introduce them to new interests and give them additional skills.

MORE ON TRAINING...

✦ Offer staff-led workshops or bring in guest speakers. You may want to recognize a star volunteer by asking them to share their skills or experience with the group.

✦ Consider that volunteers in outreach and education roles may be especially interested in training that provides them with opportunities to learn and/or practice relevant skills such as story telling, public speaking, and group facilitation.

✦ Volunteers involved in planting and stewardship may appreciate an opportunity to learn about ecological restoration. Consider providing volunteers with interesting information about the species they are planting, the species of butterflies attracted, or medicinal and native uses. Remember to offer your

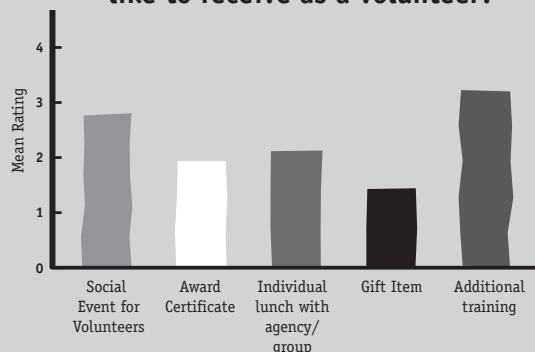
WE ASKED VOLUNTEERS WHAT THEY WANT...

(Evergreen. Summary Report on Community Greening Volunteerism 2002)

When community greening volunteers were asked to choose between different forms of recognition, they indicated additional training as the preferred form of volunteer recognition. This preference was especially seen in volunteers who play a communication outreach/education role.

Social events were the second favorite recognition choice among volunteers. Social events were less popular among newer volunteers than those involved for many years with a project.

What type of recognition would you like to receive as a volunteer?



5

volunteers the opportunity to learn new skills that round out their current experience.

✦ Ask volunteers what they want to learn and use this information in planning events.

Catherine Goetz



SOCIAL EVENTS

Project-wide social events give volunteers the chance to get to know each other outside of their regular volunteer work. New friendships make for a more enjoyable volunteer experience, particularly for new volunteers.

MERGE TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES AND SOCIAL EVENTS WITH VOLUNTEER WORK

Combining training and socializing with volunteer work is a great way to add additional incentive, satisfaction and enjoyment to the regular volunteer experience. Plan a bird

watching or medicinal plants workshop as part of a weeding and stewardship day or plan a monthly project-wide gathering followed by a regular movie or pizza night. Watching a related educational video or informal video of a previous work day could be planned after a day of weeding or on a lunch break. Scheduling training right before an event also provides the opportunity for those not needing training to go ahead and begin working.



3. RECOGNIZE FREQUENTLY

The most effective form of recognition is day-to-day interactions. If you neglect your volunteers, you won't make it up to them in a formal ceremony. McCurley and Lynch.

Volunteer Management: Mobilizing all the Resources of the Community

Take advantage of the many opportunities to recognize your volunteers, before, during and after a project is completed.

5

✦ *Recognize when a volunteer joins your project by sending a letter of welcome, providing introductions, orientation and a tour of the project site.*

✦ *Recognize on a daily or weekly basis by providing ongoing and informal thanks, encouraging supervision and smile.*

✦ *Recognize on a monthly basis by writing an article in your newsletter or a letter to the editor of a local newspaper highlighting the group's latest accomplishments.*

✦ *Recognize at the completion of a project or event by saying thank you, sending a card, treating your volunteers to coffee or lunch or hosting a celebratory event.*

✦ *Recognize at meetings with staff or groups. Talk about the volunteer projects and individual volunteer accomplishments, praise volunteers to others and consider inviting volunteers to staff meetings.*

✦ *Recognize on occasions i.e. acknowledge birthdays or illness with a card.*

✦ *Recognize when a volunteer leaves the organization by giving them a letter of thanks, a certificate or pin of appreciation, or writing a letter of recommendation. Consider having an exit interview with the volunteer.*

4. MAKE RECOGNITION MATCH MOTIVATION

Volunteers offer their time for a variety of reasons. Our Community Greening Volunteerism Survey revealed that volunteers involved in green space projects are motivated by an interest in **"improving the environment"**, **"establishing a community connection"** and **"building employment relationships and experience"**. Parents often get involved with the desire to improve the outdoor school



environment and experience for their children. Some volunteers simply want to learn new skills for their own interest and enjoyment. Whatever the motivations of your volunteers, it is important to consider why they got

5

involved and what they hope to gain through the experience. Use the answers as your starting point when planning how to recognize your volunteers. The better your recognition efforts reflect the motivations of your volunteers, the more meaningful the recognition will be.

The best way to ensure that your recognition will target your volunteers' interests and needs is to ask them what they prefer. A short recognition questionnaire is one way to test your recognition ideas against the interests of your volunteers. Put a list together of a variety of different types of recognition ideas at a variety of different scheduled times and ask volunteers to rank their choices. This can help you get a larger turnout as well as more satisfied group of participants.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Most volunteers will feel rewarded by the sense of accomplishment that comes from seeing a job well done. Show volunteers the results of their work in practical, tangible ways. Whether a volunteer has helped write a funding application, organize administrative

record keeping, or planted and tended a garden, show them and tell them about the improvements resulting from their contribution. Before and after pictures, verbal updates on the results of their efforts, and creating opportunities for them to connect with the beneficiaries of their work, are all straightforward ways that you can help volunteers understand the outcome of their efforts and feel a sense of accomplishment.

Stewart Chisholm



5

SOCIAL REWARDS

Recognize your volunteers by creating an environment that fosters community and social connection. Social rewards can be offered through opportunities to work with others, having group contact lists provided, and organizing social get-togethers.

SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

Try to tailor volunteer training opportunities to those volunteers motivated by a desire to learn new skills and ideas. If possible, have these volunteers attend a conference or workshop, where they can further their training.

BUILDING CONFIDENCE

Give those volunteers who want to assume leadership roles the chance to do so by having them take on the task of organizing an important component of your project, be a speaker at a workshops or act as a contact person for others.

CAREER ADVANCEMENT REWARDS

Learning new skills, being recommended for a job and gaining networking opportunities are all rewards that support career advancement for a volunteer.



Martin Rudd



Stewart Chisholm

5

MATERIAL REWARDS

A tangible reward such as a draw for a prize, a special party, or a certificate of accomplishment is a great way to publicly say thank you and build good will.



Joshua Berson

You can show your appreciation by nominating exceptional volunteers for a local, city-wide or provincial volunteer award. Check with your local volunteer center, regional and provincial government for information and nomination forms for volunteer award programs being offered.

5. OTHER THINGS TO CONSIDER ABOUT VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION

- ✦ *recognize honestly – appropriate for the achievement*
- ✦ *give recognition to the person, not the work*
- ✦ *give recognition on a timely basis*
- ✦ *give recognition for what you want more of*
- ✦ *recognize effort, not just completion of task*
- ✦ *recognize specifically for the what the person did and describe what went well*
- ✦ *recognize consistently*

6 Maintenance

MAINTAINING THE MOMENTUM THROUGH MAINTENANCE WORK

Maintenance is a requirement of all school ground or community green space projects and may include weeding, watering, replacing damaged plants, maintaining signage, seating, fencing and trails, controlling pests such as rodents, mulching, trimming and pruning, filling and cleaning feeders, and ongoing general cleanup.

Planting days, spring cleanups and weeding efforts that are typically critical to the success of a project and call for an intensive effort can be

rewarding community and team building events. However, it is not uncommon to struggle with keeping volunteers motivated through the demands of maintaining a garden or naturalized area.

A well-planned and organized maintenance strategy will protect everyone's investment of energy, resources, money and time and help you to lead well-organized maintenance events to engage and retain volunteers throughout the seasonal maintenance activities required.

Maintenance Plans Must be Based on:

SITE REQUIREMENTS

Your site may require weeding once a month, once a week or twice a week for newly planted material during a drought.

VOLUNTEER BASE

Where you will get the help required and how many volunteers will participate.

ACCESS TO WATER, HOSES, KEYS AND EQUIPMENT

Access to necessary equipment will determine what time of day and what days of the week you can plan for.

*** Here are some ideas to keep the experience of maintaining a garden or naturalization project fun, easy and interesting.**

Make it Fun

1. *Keep it light and emphasize the "party" in "work party" with food (pizza), lots of people, and maybe even music!*
2. *Motivate children to come out and bring their parents by offering badges for every 10 garden events*
3. *attended or organize a draw for donated prizes.*
4. *Provide access to free snacks and drink.*
5. *Avoid having people work alone.*
6. *Name tags support socialization.*

Make it Easy



1. Schedule weeding after a good rain or water the garden before you weed so the ground will be wet and the work easier.
2. Many hands make light work; large maintenance tasks are best carried out by a big group.
3. Sharp tools and appropriate tools (size and type) are a must!
4. Think ahead and ensure that there is a simple disposal plan in place for the plant material; successful events can yield a lot of plant material for disposal or compost.
5. Keep events to a maximum of 1 hour for children and 2 hours for adults.
6. Offer some non physical tasks for those who want to participate but can't work physically i.e. they could bring food, staff the sign in table, help set up and serve pizza, take photos or direct people with questions to the people with the answers.
7. Provide lots of encouragement during the event for all the hard work (describe what you see!)
8. Use the most effective and appropriate approach for the task at hand to save time and effort. For example, instead of digging out large Canada Thistles, which will grow back if any of the root is left, it will be much easier to cut off the plants or even just the seed heads.

Make it Interesting

1. Create fun incentives (i.e. present children with a weed sample and offer a small prize for every 10 weeds they pull).
2. Incorporate an educational aspect about the medicinal use of plants, identifying insects and bugs, etc.
3. Make it into a work party that includes a social element after or mid way through.
4. Encourage "work buddies" so that volunteers can socialize while they work and keep each other company.
5. Keep volunteers informed of the importance of the maintenance effort and how it will benefit the project site.
6. Create a gardening binder to have on hand for volunteers to read when they're taking a break. Reading about the plants they are working with or seeing photos of the plants in bloom will help keep them more informed and interested in what they are doing.



MOTIVATING YOUR VOLUNTEERS THROUGHOUT THE SEASONS...

The different seasons bring their own conditions and challenges for keeping the motivations high within your project team. Always plan a season ahead for your events so that you are able to recruit and engage the team you'll need, have the materials and clearance required for events and keep the momentum alive throughout the year.



WINTER

Winter is the least demanding season in terms of maintenance but it is important to keep the momentum and connection the project alive in your volunteers. This is your opportunity to develop plans for spring; order wildflowers for contract growing from your local nursery, ramp up your fundraising efforts and fill bird feeders. Collect winter cuttings for tree nurseries if you plan to grow your own. And remember to take winter photos! Plan a mid-winter social event to keep in contact with your volunteers and keep them interested in the project.



SUMMER

Summer is often the time when there are the fewest number of people to help and yet it is the most demanding of maintenance seasons. Plan ahead so that teams are in place to share the responsibilities of weeding and watering.

1. Plan maintenance events in the early morning or evening when it's cooler.
2. Keep events to no more than two hours at a time.
3. Ensure that refreshments are available; consider offering a morning "bagel and juice" event.
4. Cold water is a must. You may want to remind volunteers to bring their own or provide it for the group.
5. Remind volunteers to dress appropriately and bring sunscreen, hats and sunglasses. Consider having extra sunscreen on hand for those who may forget.

Other activities that can be scheduled to accompanying the more demanding tasks are harvesting vegetables (hard workers can be invited to take these home), collecting wildflower seeds for next year, and taking pictures of the site.



SPRING

Spring is the season of rebirth and renewed activity in your project site. Maintenance activities will include tilling new garden areas, marking pathways and covering with woodchips, planting bare-root shrubs and trees early in the season, and planting vegetables and flowers after the last frost.

Remind volunteers to attend events wearing appropriate clothing; boots for muddy days, rain gear for rain or shine events and it is already important to have water on hand to keep your team hydrated.



FALL

Fall is a magical season outdoors. Activities will include planting, harvesting vegetables gardens, mulching trees and perennials for winter, weeding or watering as necessary and collecting leaves for winter mulching or composting. It's getting colder outdoors so reminders to dress in layers are helpful. Remember to keep in mind that the days are getting shorter when scheduling events and arranging how volunteers will get home so nobody ends up in the dark.



SchEduLiNg

Create well-established rotating, watering and weeding maintenance schedules and consider keeping a certain day and time each week or every other week for regulars to show up and pitch in. In the long run, these can save you and your volunteers time. For example, each Monday morning throughout the summer months, volunteers get together to tend EcoSuperior's Central Natural Environment Gardens. Everyone knows when to work at the gardens. This regular

maintenance day is interspersed with a couple of weekend events to allow people to attend that can't make it on the regular workday.

- ✦ Ask volunteers to sign up and commit to a certain time slot so that the work is shared and scheduled in advance.
- ✦ Allow small regular groups of volunteers to decide the scheduled maintenance days to maximize regular turnout.



How To PuT it ALL ToGETHer - ORGANIZE!

IDENTIFY THE ORGANIZING TEAM

Hats, brightly coloured work vests, or similar bright coloured t-shirts work well. It helps to have one person as the lead who understands all the tasks that need to be done.



LARGE WORK PARTIES

(FOR BIG JOBS I.E. SPRING PREP AND FALL CLEAN UP OR MAJOR PLANTING EVENTS)

Send out notification and ask for an RSVP so that you can arrange for enough food. In the notice indicate what the work is that needs to be done and what tools to bring.

- ✦ Send out a reminder a few days before.

ON THE DAY

- ✦ Announce where the first aid kit is and the beginning of the event.
- ✦ Have someone present to greet volunteers and explain the daily objectives.
- ✦ Have everyone sign in (this allows you to send a personal thank you and keep track of your numbers)
- ✦ Check in with new project volunteers periodically to answer any questions and address any concerns.



- ✦ Prepare small training sessions for the activity planned. For example, have a short instructional on tree planting prior to sending out volunteers.
- ✦ Have a master list on chart paper of what needs to be done and where to go. Cross off the tasks as they are completed.
- ✦ Assign important tasks to specific event leaders or assistants to ensure that they are completed.
- ✦ At sign in, let volunteers choose the type of task from the list or assign the task if necessary.
- ✦ Factor in time for clean up so no one is left to do it all alone.

OTHER HELPFUL CONSIDERATIONS of Successful Maintenance Events

- ✦ Safe storage and access to watering equipment and tools for volunteers coming out on their own. Consider organizing a key rotation schedule for tool shed lock up or ask volunteers to bring their own tools.
- ✦ Phone number lists distributed to the group so that volunteers can get in touch to swaps shifts if someone's availability changes
- ✦ Carpooling to provide access to events for those without access to transportation.
- ✦ A buddy system that pairs one person to set up the watering equipment and the other to put it away.
- ✦ Washroom access is a must for long, remote or children-friendly events.
- ✦ Childcare for parents with younger children – having one or two people who will supervise other volunteers' children.
- ✦ Safety considerations and emergency contact information for participants. **Tip:** write out and keep handy the address of the project or written directions to the site if there is no street address to direct emergency vehicles.
- ✦ Evaluate the activities and events in general. Make note of successes and things you would do differently next time. Repetitively dealing with the same challenges will be frustrating to you and your volunteers.
- ✦ Discuss potential issue at the site such as other park users, whether or not to approach people breaking park rules, i.e. dogs off leash or accessing restricted areas.



REFERENCES

- Connors, Tracy Daniel, Ed. *Volunteer Management Handbook*. John Wiley and Sons Inc., 1995.
- Evergreen. *Summary Report on Community Gr eening Volunteerism 2002*. Toronto: Evergreen, 2002. Available to download at www.evergreen.ca
- Fels, Lynn. *Getting Started – Establishing a Volunteer Program*. Toronto: Volunteer Centre of Metropolitan Toronto, 1988.
- Hall, Micheal, Larry McKeown and Karen Roberts. *Caring Canadians, Involved Canadians: Highlights from the 2000 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating*. Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2000
- Hawthorne, Nan. "Matching the 'Thank-you' to the volunteer." *Canadian FundRaiser*, June 30, 1998.
- McClintock, Norah. *Quick Tips for Volunteer Management*. Toronto: Canadian Centre for Philanthropy, 2002. Available at www.nsgvp.org.
- McClintock, Norah. *Volunteering Numbers: Using the National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating for Fundraising*. Toronto: Canadian Centre for Philanthropy, 2000. Available at www.nsgvp.org.
- McCurley, Steve and Rick Lynch. *Volunteer management: Mobilizing all the Resources of the Community*. Downers Grove, IL: Heritage Arts Publishing, 1996. *This is one of the most comprehensive texts on involving volunteers in organizations.*
- McKeown, Larry. *Volunteering in Canada*. Toronto: Canadian Centre for Philanthropy, 2002. Available at www.nsgvp.org.
- McKeown, Larry. *Who are Canada's Volunteers*. Toronto: Canadian Centre for Philanthropy, 2002. Available at www.nsgvp.org
- Woloshuk, Jean M and Shirley C. Eagan. *Beating Burnout*. West Virginia: West Virginia University Extension Service, 1993.
- Wyman, Ken. *Volunteer Management and Fundraising: An introductory course* (Course material). Toronto: Greenability, 2002.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Federation of Ontario Naturalists has produced a series of helpful fact sheets for volunteer-driven conservation groups that deal with the issues of liability, incorporation and charitable status. The fact sheets are available to download at www.ontarionature.org, use the search option with key words "fact sheets".

Volunteer Canada. A Guide to Volunteer Program Management Resources. Ottawa: Volunteer Canada, 2001. *This publication lists the Top 20 volunteer program management resources, as well as additional resources, web sites, periodicals and other useful information sources.*

Volunteer Canada. *Volunteer Connections*. Ottawa: Volunteer Canada, 2001. *This set of four volunteer program management manuals address issues such as involving youth, creating accessible and inclusive environments and involving older adults*. Available to download at Volunteer Canada's website www.volunteer.ca

Muttart Foundation and Alberta Community Development. *Board Building: Recruiting and Developing Effective Board Members for Not-for-Profit Organizations. Board Development Workbook*. 1997. Available to download at www.cd.gov.ab.ca. To order: visit www.rcvo.org/board.html or call (780) 497-5616.

WEBSITES

www.charityvillage.com – This website is Canada's supersite for the nonprofit sector, with 3,000 pages of news, jobs, information, articles and resources on philanthropy and volunteerism.

www.givingandvolunteering.ca – This website contains key statistics on charitable giving and volunteering in Canada.

www.nonprofitscan.ca – This website is designed to serve the needs of anyone who works in, studies or has an interest in the Canadian nonprofit sector.

www.pitchin.org – This electronic magazine (e-zine) is dedicated to the discussion of volunteerism, with a special focus on issues related to youth and voluntary action.

www.rcvo.org – This is the Website of the Resource Centre for Voluntary Organizations which offers an on-line library of articles, resources on volunteer management and board development.

www.tnpr.ca – The TOTAL Non Profit Resources Website is designed to assist both staff and volunteers working for small to medium-sized voluntary sector organizations in accessing their resources they require to effectively manage their organizations.

www.volunteer.ca – This is Canada's Website for information on volunteering.

Hands for Nature

Greener Neighbourhoods through Enhanced Volunteerism



Hands for Nature Greener Neighbourhoods through Enhanced Volunteerism

Community greening is a vital way of improving the health of our communities, and volunteers are the backbone of this work. Evergreen, Sudbury Better Beginnings Better Futures, and EcoSuperior are working together to strengthen how volunteers contribute to and are recognized within Ontario's environmental movement. Called Hands for Nature, the project's core goals are twofold: to improve how groups leading greening projects involve volunteers; and to strengthen the skills of volunteers who participate in greening projects. This project is made possible by a grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation in recognition of the International Year of the Volunteer in 2001.

Partners in Hands for Nature

Evergreen's mission is to bring communities and nature together for the benefit of both. We engage people in creating and sustaining healthy, dynamic outdoor spaces - in our schools, our communities and our homes. We believe that local stewardship creates vibrant neighbourhoods, a healthy natural environment and a sustainable society for all.

EcoSuperior strives to increase public awareness and participation in building a cleaner, greener community and a healthy environment through local green space initiatives, water and energy conservation, waste-reduction and pollution prevention.

Sudbury Better Beginnings Better Futures is a non-profit charitable organization whose mandate is to work with children and their families by promoting a healthy environment through community development, environmental/green space projects, childcare programs, school-based programming and caregiver involvement support.

Support provided by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources.



THE ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION
LA FONDATION TRILLIUM DE L'ONTARIO

"Evergreen, EcoSuperior and Sudbury Better Beginnings Better Futures gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Ontario Trillium Foundation, an agency of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Recreation. With \$100 million in annual funding from the province's charitable gaming initiative, the Foundation provides grants to eligible charitable and not-for-profit organizations in the arts, culture, sports, recreation, environment and social service sectors."

evergreen.ca

355 Adelaide St W, 5th Flr
Toronto, ON M5V 1S2
Tel: 416-596-1495 Fax: 416-596-1443

#107-555 Great Northern Way
Vancouver, BC V5T 1E2
Tel: 604-689-0766 Fax: 604-669-6222

info@evergreen.ca | Toll free in Canada 1-888-426-3138

Donations are tax deductible. Charitable Registration Number: BN 131815763 RR0001

National Supporters of Common Grounds



Lead Partners



Major Partners



Media Partners

