



Yakima Area Arboretum Volunteer Naturalist Program

Mission

Arboretum Naturalists are volunteer educators who promote awareness, understanding and respect for the natural world by fostering principles of sustainability, connectivity, and an appreciation for the biodiversity of Central Washington.

Program Overview

Upon completion of an initial 5-week training period, volunteer Naturalists, **with the assistance, guidance, and support of Arboretum staff**, will design Naturalist led tours to share with the general public from late May through October. Naturalists may also assist with various Arboretum education and outreach programs, such as school field trips, Arboretum tours and community events.

Tours are subject to review and approval by Arboretum staff, but volunteer Naturalists are encouraged to develop tours and hands-on educational activities for whatever environmentally relevant topic they find compelling and is easily explored on or near the Arboretum grounds or other approved sites. Tour programming might include the Arboretum's history, display gardens and tree collections, plant, bird, or butterfly identification, mushroom foraging and identification, gardening techniques and practices,

orienteeing and map reading, and botanical and/or landscape drawing. Proposed programs will be assessed on educational value, and opportunity for direct interaction with the subject matter.

Opportunities for continuing in the role of volunteer Naturalist will be assessed in early November.

Who Should Apply

The Arboretum seeks passionate and committed individuals to be a part of its volunteer Naturalist program. Naturalists will develop their knowledge of local ecology, hone their observation and identification skills, and learn how to be an effective communicator of their passion for the outdoors. Participants who successfully complete the initial training course will have the opportunity to assist the Arboretum in community outreach and education. Only current Arboretum members will be considered.

The ideal candidate:

- Has a long standing passion for the outdoors
- Has an interest in developing regional natural history knowledge and in sharing that knowledge with others
- Is capable of walking three miles
- Is comfortable speaking in front of small groups
- Has a sense of humor!
- Participants in this program must hold a current Arboretum membership

Program Details

The program begins with an initial training course spanning five 4 hour sessions on Saturdays starting mid- April to mid- May. The course will be conducted by Arboretum staff, community experts, and the Naturalists-in-training participants. Naturalists-in-training are expected to attend all five sessions, and complete all reading and writing assignments. The course is designed to provide candidates with a broad working knowledge of the local ecosystem and Arboretum grounds. During training, participants will have ample opportunity to practice addressing/teaching small groups, and will receive guidance on how to communicate with and guide small groups effectively.

Naturalists-in-training will be asked to read and offer written reflections on Basin and Range (IBN: 9780374516901) by John McPhee and Summer World (9780060742188) by Bernd Heinrich. Both books will be offered in the Arboretum gift shop at a reduced rate. In addition, participants will also submit written reflections and bi-weekly entries in a natural history journal during the training period.

Once the initial training coursework is completed, volunteer Naturalists will continue their education through personal study and monthly meetings. The training period will culminate in the development of volunteer Naturalist led programs to begin in early June.

2014 Program Dates

Training Course

Training Location: Yakima Area Arboretum, plus additional sites TBA

Class Times: 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM

Total Class Hours: 20

Yakima Area Arboretum, 1401 Arboretum Drive, Yakima, WA 98901 – (509) 248-7337

Revised 3/9/2014

<u>Training Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>
Saturday, April 19	The Naturalist's Practice w/ Jacob Belsher (At the Arboretum)
Saturday, April 26	Local Geology and Climate
Saturday, May 3	Birding with Andy Stepniewski
Saturday, May 10	Plant ID
Saturday, May 17	Arboretum History and Collection (At the Arboretum)

Naturalist Led Tours/Outreach

Tour Locations: Yakima Area Arboretum or Affiliated Sites TBA

Dates: Once a month from 6/1 – Mid October

Total Tour Hours: 22

Continuing Education

Meeting Location: Yakima Area Arboretum or Affiliated Sites TBA

Tour Time: TBD

Dates: Once a month June – September, TBD

Total Hours: 8 (Two hours per month or equivalent)

Estimated Program Training Hours at Completion: 50

Naturalist Certification Celebration

Date: Mid October

Maintaining Your Volunteer Naturalist Certification

Upon successful completion of the requirements described above, participants will be presented with a document identifying them as a Yakima Area Arboretum certified Naturalists. Certified Naturalist's maintain their current status by contributing 40 hours per year to continuing education and Arboretum outreach. **At least half of these annual maintenance hours must be recorded by working in Arboretum education and outreach programs.**

Program Fee

All instruction is offered free of charge, however, program participants are asked to be current Arboretum members and to purchase all of their class reading materials. Required reading materials will be offered in the Arboretum gift shop at reduced rates.

How to Apply

Submit contact information and a cover letter explaining your interest in the program to Jacob Belsher via email at jacob@ahtrees.org. For additional information, call Jacob at 509 248 7337. **Please note all volunteer Naturalists are subject to background checks.**