

Meadow Orchard Project

SITE LEADER ROLE DESCRIPTION

Thank you for volunteering to be a site leader at Meadow Orchard. We hope that you will have fun, inspire others, meet new people, keep learning and have a positive experience. Volunteers are at the heart of this community project and we rely on site leaders for the site to be open to the public. Your contribution will make a big difference and help the Meadow Orchard Project to thrive. We aim to have two site leaders available for open days so you hopefully won't be alone.

Below is an overview of what the role involves and what is expected of you.

The site leader role involves:

- opening and closing the Meadow Orchard site on a Saturday between 12-4pm (or two-hour slots are possible)
- welcoming visitors and volunteers
- giving a brief induction to the site to new volunteers and giving an overview of tasks to be done
- supervising / facilitating volunteer activities to include site maintenance and activities in the garden, orchard and wildlife areas, and other projects where relevant. We aim to write up tasks on the blackboard or a more experienced site leader can explain tasks to you in advance.
- being responsible for health and safety, including safe tool use, alerting people to potential hazards and making sure volunteers are carrying out activities safely.
- making sure that clearing up and putting all tools/equipment away happens at the end of day.
- supporting volunteers to feel welcomed and have a positive experience during the day.
- recording activities that have taken place and names of volunteers attending in the site log book.

Site leaders are expected to:

- If possible, offer at least 4 sessions a year for continuity and so that you can learn about the site (approx 16 hours a year), although you can give more or less.
- Sign up for a rota slot and commit to attending this session. If for any reason you are unable to attend or need to change your slot please try to find someone to replace you (via the General WhatsApp group or via email).
- Carry out activities safely and read and adhere to the health and safety risk log for the site.
- Read and adhere to the volunteer policy and code of conduct - see website.
- Represent the Meadow Orchard and its aims and the people involved in a positive light
- Contribute to the general maintenance, upkeep and tidying of the site as a collective responsibility.
- Leave the site and equipment in a cared-for and orderly state and take away any rubbish generated from the day's activities

OVERVIEW OF RUNNING A TYPICAL VOLUNTEER DAY

1. Welcome new volunteers – give them an induction to the site features, where things are, what we do here, things to be aware of etc. Eg garden, orchard, wildlife meadow, how to use toilet, where tools are etc
2. If someone has just come to visit or look around you can tell them a bit about the project, what we do and invite them to have a walk around. You can tell them to sign up for the monthly newsletter on the website - www.meadoworchard.org and give them a flier. Encourage them to come back to volunteer or to come to an event.
3. Optional - if you have time you can do a site tour at lunchtime for new people and visitors.

4. Explain the range of tasks to volunteers and offer a choice to cater for different abilities and interests, including lighter, easier tasks for those with limitations. Show people what to do if needed and offer tips, allow people to share their own ideas too.
5. Make sure people are carrying out activities safely and if necessary show them the health and safety risk log or alert them to health and safety issues - eg not leaving tools lying around, safe lifting techniques, safe use of tools etc. If you are confident using an unfamiliar tool you can give a demonstration. See TCV booklet 'using tools safely'.
6. General socialising with new volunteers throughout the day so they feel welcomed. Find out if they have specific interests or skills to offer. Let them know about projects they might want to get involved with or to share their ideas and observations.
7. Invite people to have lunch together. Optional - you can make tea using the storm kettle. There are teabags/sugar/cups etc in the blue shed and fresh herbs in the herb beds - mint, lemon balm, rosemary, sage, thyme, nettle etc. Drinking water is filled from cricket club or health centre or you can bring it from home. Site leaders can bring milk and biscuits with them. Put a donations jar out to cover costs (suggested 20p a cup).
8. Allow around **30 minutes** at the end of day for clearing up the site, putting away equipment, washing-up. This always takes longer than you think. Make sure everyone helps so you are not left with clearing up on your own. Make sure tools are put away neatly in the designated place to maintain an orderly space for other garden users.
9. The urine container under the compost toilet needs emptying from time to time. So if you are brave you can do this if it needs emptying into one of the compost bays. Wear rubber gloves and wash your hands with soap after.
10. At the end of the day, thank volunteers for their help and encourage them to come back.
11. Record names of who has come to volunteer in the site log book and the jobs that have been done or any messages for the next open day.

GARDEN JOBS - ask one of the regular gardeners for an induction to the plants and seasonal jobs and get to know the garden.

Seed sowing and transplanting early spring onwards.

Ongoing soil improvement, composting and mulching beds.

Maintaining or improving bed borders and cutting back grass from edges.

Weeding veg and herb beds. There are a lot of medicinal herbs and perennials so get familiar with the plants. General rule, mainly weeding out grass if you don't know.

Watering crops in summer, feeding with comfrey/worm/nettle fertilizer.

Making plant labels

Maintaining compost bays and wormery – turn compost once a year, add water if too dry. Encourage people to bring kitchen waste from home to add to wormery / compost. Empty worm juice jar into plastic worm-tea bottle for liquid fertiliser (this is next to wormery). Always keep the tap open and jar underneath to prevent worms drowning.

Harvesting salad, veg and herbs

Pest control for slugs, aphids and birds (e.g slug barriers, put up netting around brassicas, washing off aphids etc)

Collecting and storing seeds in Autumn

Raking up dead leaves in Autumn/Winter and putting in leaf mulch bay.

ORCHARD JOBS

Mulching around fruit trees - Cover tree canopy area around 1m diameter with doubled-up overlapping layer of cardboard, so that there are no gaps. Always leave a 5cm gap around the tree trunk to allow air circulation and prevent rotting. Cover cardboard with wood-chip, leaf-mulch, straw or hay for mulch, weigh down with a few sticks/stones so does not blow away. Spread material outwards to edges of tree canopy rather than close to tree trunk to encourage roots to spread outwards.

Watering young new trees in summer.

Tree-care days are usually organised with site leaders who have some experience and knowledge of orchard management. There are basic principles and techniques to follow for pruning fruit trees and bushes, so ask someone who knows how to prune (Vie, Patrick, Kate). Removing disease, damage, staking trees if needed etc.

WILDLIFE ACTIVITIES

Read London Wildlife Trust ecological survey and management plan here:
www.meadoworchard.org/wildlife

In the winter dormant season, cut back bramble thickets **just to the grass line**, to avoid disturbing nesting birds, foxes and other wildlife. Do not cut them right back as the bramble is part of the habitat conservation area. We are aiming to stop them encroaching into the open meadow grassland areas.

Throughout the year, cut back or pull out bramble runners that have intruded onto the pathways or open meadow grassland areas in the centre.

Scyth the meadow grassland twice a year between October and end of March – half the site to be cut in alternate yearly cycles. Rake all grass cuttings from meadow the week after to allow seeds to drop and invertebrates to escape. Take care to not damage ant-hills and fruit trees. Pile grass cuttings in one heap at edge of site.

Remove oak tree saplings growing in meadow areas.

Create log-borders / dead-hedges.

Coppicing the trees in the meadow / woodland areas.

Planting/sowing native wild flowers around site for insects.

Building habitat bird / bat boxes, habitat piles, insect hotels etc

SITE MAINTENANCE JOBS

COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ONGOING UPKEEP OF THE SITE AND FACILITIES IS ESSENTIAL. All site users are responsible for this as there are no paid caretakers. If everyone does a bit the project can survive and thrive!

Tidying and organising storage areas - tool shed, blue shed, around sheds, toilet, storage areas along fences, wood-stores, crockery boxes, cob-oven area, roundhouse, social areas. PLEASE KEEP THE TOOL SHED IN AN ORDERLY STATE SO THAT IT CAN BE EASILY USED BY ALL.

Litter clearing around the site and buildings. Taking away unwanted stuff, rubbish and recycling. Plastic bags are hanging up outside the toilet (bring spare bags from home to top up).

Repairs - guttering, water butts, sheds, polytunnel, tools, equipment, gate, anything that needs fixing.

Clearing leaves out of the gutters and maintaining water butts.

Clearing pathways of long grass, bramble etc all around the site, particularly in summer in the back half of the site. Cut grass around sheds and polytunnel and garden beds.

Making signage and maintaining noticeboards – any info signs or notices that are needed.

Checking for trip hazards around the site such as branches, logs, foliage, roots, holes, bed borders etc and remove or fill in.

Sorting stuff that people bring to the site. PLEASE DISCOURAGE PEOPLE FROM BRINGING ITEMS TO THE SITE THAT DO NOT HAVE A USE AND CANNOT BE STORED EASILY

Maintaining tools and equipment

Filling up first-aid kit, buying toilet roll, hand soap, cleaning stuff, stationery, other items etc.

Cleaning and tidying toilet shed

Other ad hoc things that need doing.

PRACTICAL PROJECTS

Roundhouse projects

Carpentry projects

Polytunnel re-cover

Pond project

Info display board

Accessible wheel-chair pathway

Cob-oven shelter green roof

Lots more creative ideas.....