



NORTH BAY
HERITAGE
GARDENERS

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

A Guide to Our Volunteer Program

North Bay Heritage Gardeners

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The Heritage Gardeners thrive because of dedicated volunteers like you. Your active involvement makes it possible to grow our vision and bring our mission to life.



Welcome to the North Bay Heritage Gardeners!

Our Mission Statement

The North Bay Heritage Gardeners is a non-profit organization dedicated to developing a year-round, community-based, educational, horticultural, and environmental program whose main focus is to enhance and beautify the North Bay Waterfront.

Our Values and Principles

Volunteerism is the cornerstone to the Heritage Gardeners' success. Our values are a guide for the following actions:

- Recognizing that volunteers are essential to achieving our mission.
- Believing that volunteer involvement promotes awareness, shared responsibility, and participation in building a sustainable community.
- Acknowledging that volunteers seek meaningful opportunities to enrich their lives, develop skills, and give back to their community.
- Respecting each volunteer's contributions and learning from their feedback and experiences.
- Providing equal access to volunteer opportunities for individuals of all backgrounds and abilities.
- Maintaining a safe and welcoming environment, with the understanding that volunteers will follow risk management procedures designed for their safety.
- Expecting all volunteers to act with responsibility, respect, and integrity in all aspects of their involvement.

Our Gardens and Design Philosophy

The Heritage Gardeners exist to create and maintain beautiful, ornamental gardens along the waterfront—spaces that enhance the public environment and bring joy to the community. While we value creativity and input from all volunteers, individual planting choices must align with the overall aesthetic and planting goals set by the Design Committee, the Chair of the Design Team, and the City of North Bay. Volunteers are welcome to contribute ideas for their garden beds, but the final decision rests with the design leadership to ensure consistency and harmony across all sites.

OUR THANKS AND WHO WE ARE

Volunteers are the heart of the Heritage Gardeners, and their contributions are invaluable to our success. Thank you to everyone who gives their time and talents to support our mission.

We want to be sure that you understand your rights and responsibilities. If you have any questions, please call the Heritage Gardeners' office at (705) 825-4118 or email us at heritage.gardeners@heritagenorthbay.com.

We encourage you to send us your personal volunteering stories, visit our Heritage Gardeners website, and follow us on social media @NBHGardeners.

If you wish to withdraw from our communications, contact the Heritage Gardeners Office Administrator and Volunteer Coordinator, Kyra Bates.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee is a body of volunteers that establishes the Heritage Gardeners' mission, values, and governing policies. Since the volunteer Executive Committee operates at the level of organizational governance, their work differs significantly from that of our other volunteers.

For this reason, the executive is governed by the Heritage Gardeners' Procedures and Policies Manual. Heritage North Bay holds both legal and fiduciary responsibilities for the Heritage Gardener Organization, gives approval to governing policies, and employs the Heritage Gardeners' Office Administrator & Volunteer Coordinator.

Executive Committee Members

Carol-Ann DiBartolomeo	Co-Chair
Wanda Wallace	Co-Chair
Bonnie Cappadocia	Design Team Chair
Brenda Avison	Education Team Chair
Joan Clark	Advisor
Susan Foster-Fulton	Advisor
Ingrid Pedersen	Advisor
Cindy Bethune	Advisor

**THANK YOU FOR DOING YOUR PART TOWARDS
KEEPING NORTH BAY BEAUTIFUL!**

GETTING STARTED AS A VOLUNTEER

Volunteer Registration

Your volunteer time may include working at the waterfront, supporting Heritage Gardener activities and events, participating in horticultural and environmental education sessions, and attending team get-togethers to discuss gardening plans. Volunteers can register using our online form (link provided below), and all participants are required to complete a Volunteer Registration Form.

The Heritage Gardeners are committed to creating an inclusive, respectful, and equitable environment for all volunteers. We do not tolerate discrimination or harassment based on any ground protected under the Ontario Human Rights Code, including but not limited to: age, ancestry, colour, race, citizenship, ethnic origin, place of origin, creed (religion), disability, family status, marital status, gender identity, gender expression, sex (including pregnancy and breastfeeding), and sexual orientation.

No experience is required.

To volunteer you must complete and sign a Volunteer Registration Form. The form:

- sets out the agreed-upon tasks and time commitments.
- includes a waiver of liability.
- allows you to be assigned to a team.

Link to Volunteer Registration page:

<https://northbayheritagegardeners.com/volunteers/>

Volunteer Safety Guidelines

When registering to be a volunteer, you agree to follow the safety practices outlined in our *Safety Guidelines* handout. This includes wearing cobbler aprons and closed-toe shoes at all times, bringing and using your own gardening gloves, and being familiar with our emergency procedures. Please review the handout thoroughly before your first time at the waterfront.

Minors

If you are under the age of 18, you must complete the registration form with a parent or guardian, who will be required to provide their consent. Please note that you may not perform any volunteer duties at the waterfront unless you are supervised by your Team Leader or their designate.

We are happy to support high school students in earning their required volunteer hours and can provide a confirmation letter upon request. If you have any questions regarding this process, please contact the Office Administrator.

YOUR VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

Orientation and Training

While we do not hold formal orientation or training sessions, we recommend that volunteers begin with their team early in the season—typically in mid-May. Starting early in the season helps you stay informed about upcoming events, take part in initial team meetings, and become familiar with your team before the summer gets fully underway.

Safe Practices

The Heritage Gardeners and its volunteers should recognize that there is some inherent risk in our activities. By signing the Volunteer Registration Form, volunteers acknowledge that they are capable of safely participating in Heritage Gardeners activities, acknowledge and accept these inherent risks, and agree to waive any right to hold the Heritage Gardeners liable for injury or loss incurred during their volunteer work.

A volunteer can opt-out of activities which may cause concern for their health or safety. If you are unable to participate in certain volunteer tasks, please make sure to advise your Team Leader of this.

All workplace and volunteer injuries must be reported and will be documented using an Incident Report Form. While the Heritage Gardeners take steps to provide a safe environment and reduce risks, volunteers are also responsible for their own safety - particularly when working near the waterfront or in potentially hazardous areas. Volunteers must review the *Safety Guidelines* handout carefully and follow all recommended practices, especially in situations involving sharp tools, inclement weather, or any other conditions that may impact safe gardening.

Volunteer Time and Participation

- We require open and regular communication between Team Leaders and volunteers. Team Leaders will share important updates, event news, and any changes that affect their teams, and volunteers are encouraged to stay connected and reach out with any questions or ideas.
- Gardeners are asked to keep a casual record of their volunteer hours to help us track community involvement. Hours are collected by Team Leaders at the end of each season.
- If you need to step away from volunteering, we simply ask for one week's notice.
- Most teams meet for about an hour each week — if a team chooses to meet more often, that's up to the Team Leader and the team members.

Always remember our motto: "Have an hour? Plant a flower!"

VOLUNTEER RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

At the Heritage Gardeners, we believe volunteers are a vital part of our organization and community. We are committed to creating a welcoming and supportive environment where volunteers feel respected, safe, and valued.

As a volunteer, you have the right to:

- Work in a safe and healthy environment, including the right to know about and refuse unsafe work
- Be treated with respect and appreciation for your contributions
- Receive clear information and guidance about your role and tasks
- Share your ideas, provide input, and be heard regarding your volunteer experience
- Receive feedback on your participation when requested
- Ask for help or support from the Office Administrator/Volunteer Coordinator or Team Leader when needed
- Be accommodated for accessibility or ability-related needs where possible
- Request documentation of your hours or a confirmation letter

As a volunteer, you are responsible for:

- Acting with respect for the organization, your fellow volunteers, the community, and our shared spaces
- Performing your assigned tasks to the best of your ability and in a reliable, responsible manner
- Following all Heritage Gardeners guidelines, safety procedures, and policies
- Informing your Team Leader or the Volunteer Coordinator if you're unable to attend or complete your shift.
- Being open to feedback and willing to communicate any concerns or suggestions.

REPRESENTING THE HERITAGE GARDENERS

Volunteers and staff should be readily recognizable to the public when undertaking activities for the Heritage Gardeners. Each registered Heritage Gardener volunteer is provided with a cobbler apron. Other identification will be issued as needed. Volunteers are required to wear their cobbler aprons proudly while working at the waterfront.

Public Representation

Public representation of the Heritage Gardeners shall not be made by any volunteer.

This includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- public statements
- statements to the media
- coalition efforts with other organizations
- lobbying actions
- agreements involving contractual or financial obligations

If you are approached for any of the above reasons, contact the Heritage Gardeners' Office Administrator and Volunteer Coordinator immediately and follow their guidance.

Inappropriate Behaviour

Examples of behaviour that will not be tolerated include, but are not limited to:

- Inefficient or careless performance of volunteer duties
- Improper or negligent use of Heritage Gardeners' property, facilities, or equipment
- Rude, disrespectful, or discourteous treatment of others
- Violation of organizational rules or procedures, including failure to follow safety requirements or providing false information
- Disruption of team morale, safety, efficiency, or program operations
- Harassment of volunteers, staff, or the public—including but not limited to sexual harassment

Liability

The Heritage Gardeners do not reimburse volunteers for personal expenses related to their volunteer activities. This includes travel, personally purchased tools, required gardening gloves, or any other supplies volunteers choose to bring or use. If volunteers choose to bring their own equipment, they do so at their own risk, and the Heritage Gardeners are not responsible for any loss or damage.

Any volunteer who uses a personal or rental vehicle in the course of their work for the Heritage Gardeners is responsible for ensuring the vehicle is properly insured, maintained, and operated, according to legal requirements.

GRIEVANCES AND COMPLAINTS

A complaint regarding a volunteer's behavior is rare, but may be initiated by staff or volunteers of the Heritage Gardeners.

All volunteers and staff have a right to an environment in which their dignity is respected, and which is free from discrimination, prejudice, intimidation, and all forms of harassment.

The Heritage Gardeners' Office Administrator/Volunteer Coordinator is responsible for ensuring that all complaints are acknowledged promptly and directed to the appropriate person for immediate resolution.

Grievance Process

- If you have a disagreement or have problems with a peer, try to resolve the issue together.
- If a resolution cannot be reached, approach your Team Leader or the Office Administrator; you can also choose to submit your complaint anonymously via mail or to the North Bay Museum.
- If a resolution still cannot be reached, you may send a written summary of your concern by email to the Office Administrator or a member of the Heritage Gardeners Executive Committee for further review.
- An Executive Committee member will acknowledge the complaint within one week.
- The Executive Committee will meet to discuss the grievance and options for everyone involved.
- Every effort will be made to ensure a mutually agreeable solution through dialogue and negotiation.

Note

- If you have a complaint about the Heritage Gardeners' Office Administrator or staff, you should contact a member of the Heritage Gardeners' Executive Committee.
- If you have a complaint about an Executive Committee Member, you should contact the Heritage Gardeners' Office Administrator.

Reassignment

Reassignment may be requested by a volunteer or may be recommended by their Team Leader, Office Administrator, or Horticultural Coordinator.

If you wish to be reassigned, please submit a request to the Office Administrator via email.

Dismissal

Situations that warrant the dismissal of a volunteer are very rare. Reasons include, but are not limited to:

- Breaches of policy or confidentiality
- Illegal activity
- Any behaviour/action detrimental to the health, safety or reputation of the Heritage Gardeners

VOLUNTEER RECORDS AND DATA PROTECTION

Paper and electronic files are created for each volunteer and contain the following information:

- Your completed Volunteer Registration Form.
- Notes regarding your interview and reference checks, if applicable.
- Record of volunteer activity, including time logs.



All volunteer information is managed by the Heritage Gardeners' Office Administrator and Volunteer Coordinator with proper safeguards for confidentiality. Information will only be released with a volunteer's permission. Files are kept at least three years following a volunteer's last year of service with the Heritage Gardeners.

Personal Information

Personal information collected from a volunteer may be used for the following:

- Processing a membership or donation, including issuing of a tax receipt.
- Contacting the individual to renew membership, to inform them of a Heritage Gardener campaign, or to involve the volunteer in an event.
- To request feedback and/or to survey volunteer needs.
- Providing the volunteer with Heritage Gardener updates by mail or email.
- To provide an employment reference, if requested by the volunteer.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Heritage Gardeners are committed to creating a safe, welcoming, and supportive environment for all. We deeply value the generous gifts of time and effort our volunteers give, and we want every volunteer to feel truly appreciated. Here are some of the ways we celebrate and recognize our volunteers:

- Our newsletters highlight the projects, stories, and accomplishments of our volunteers, showcasing their hard work and dedication.
- Invitations to special events are extended to volunteers throughout the year.
- An annual volunteer appreciation symposium is hosted to celebrate all volunteers, featuring a thank-you lunch and recognition of milestone achievements.
- Volunteers are honored with milestone pins to celebrate 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, and 30 years of service to the organization.