

Volunteer role description – Gardening volunteer

About Bankside Open Spaces Trust

Bankside Open Spaces Trust is an environmental and volunteering charity. In 2025 we marked 25 years of protecting, preserving, and enhancing parks, gardens and other amenities in London's SE1 and surrounding areas.

We were set up in 2000 with the aim of improving people's health and wellbeing by making where they live and work greener and more beautiful. We manage and maintain open spaces, welcome volunteers from both the community and the corporate sector, run regular gardening groups, support park steering groups, organise and take part in public events and educational projects, and offer advice to others. We collaborate closely with local residents and businesses to champion green spaces.

Thousands of people enjoy our open spaces every day. Each of our sites is unique, with its own atmosphere, identity, and sense of place. Our spaces include Red Cross Garden, Marlborough Sports Garden, Waterloo Millennium Green and Tate Community Garden.

Gardening volunteers

Gardening volunteers are the backbone of our work. We run gardening groups during the week and one Saturday a month across several sites in the SE1 area. We welcome applications from anyone who wants to get involved – previous gardening or volunteering experience is not necessary; just enthusiasm and the willingness to get stuck in!

We are an inclusive organisation that endeavours to make our spaces and volunteering opportunities as accessible as possible, to meet the needs of our diverse community. We consider everyone's circumstances and design sessions that are supportive and safe for everyone involved. Tasks are suited to all levels of fitness and needs, from digging and planting to watering and seed sprinkling.

Recruitment

All potential gardening volunteers are asked to complete a Volunteer Application Form and submit this to the Volunteer Coordinator. The application form asks for details of two references where at least one should be someone who knows you in a professional capacity, e.g. a previous or current employer or volunteer supervisor, a teacher, probation officer or support worker. A reference cannot be someone related to you. If you are having trouble finding a suitable reference, contact the Volunteer Coordinator. Referrals from other agencies are also welcome.

Potential volunteers will then be invited for an informal chat with our Volunteer Coordinator, either in person or via phone or Zoom. This is an opportunity for you to find out more about us and the role and for us to find out more about you. We will then work out which sessions would be best for you and where we have space or whether we can suggest an alternative role or organisation that would be more suited to you.

Main responsibilities and tasks for gardening volunteers

1. To attend trial gardening group(s) where a short induction will be given by our trained, friendly gardening staff. There are different tasks, and staff will always aim to find work that meets your physical and mental/emotional needs and abilities.

2. To attend a regular gardening group and participate in the planned activities with ongoing guidance from our trained gardening staff (subject to a successful trial).

3. To observe the Health and Safety requirements (as explained in the informal chat, induction, and handbook) and act on instructions given by the group leader.

4. To be friendly and welcoming to other volunteers, staff, and the public at all times and to have regard for our Equal Opportunities Policy, Safeguarding Policy, Confidentiality Policy and Volunteer Handbook as outlined in the induction process.

Hours

Hours are flexible based on when the volunteer is available. Each session lasts between 2.5 and 5 hours and sessions are available on various days, including some Saturdays, subject to space availability.

Clothing

We will provide rainwear if necessary. Volunteers should wear appropriate clothing for the weather and clothes they don't mind getting dirty. No inappropriate or offensive clothing should be worn. On most of our sites volunteers should wear suitable closed toe shoes, e.g. trainers. Sturdy work boots are required on some sites, and we can provide these where necessary.

What we provide

This is a voluntary role and no salary will be paid, but in return for your time you will:

1. Receive full induction and training
2. Have the opportunity to feel fitter and healthier
3. Get your hands dirty and enjoy the great outdoors while in Central London
4. Share or gain gardening knowledge
5. Be part of a varied team and make new friends
6. Learn new skills
7. For long term volunteers references may be provided

Anyone who volunteers for five or more hours a day will receive a meal deal. Reimbursement of travel expenses is also available when this would be a barrier to volunteering.

Other Bankside Open Spaces Trust volunteer opportunities available include:

- Crossbones Warden
- Events Volunteer
- Pond / Compost Volunteer
- Ecohouse Volunteer

- Living Space Repair Ranger Volunteer
- Gardening Club Volunteer Project Assistant
- Trustee

For more information on these roles or on anything related to volunteering please contact our Volunteer team – volunteer@bost.org.uk / 020 7403 3393.