



## San Francisco Botanical Garden Society

### Job Description

**Position Title:** Curator

**Full or Part Time:** Full-Time

**Regular or Temporary:** Regular

**Exempt or Non-exempt:** Exempt, salaried

**Salary:** Dependent on experience

San Francisco Botanical Garden Society (SFBGS), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, is seeking an energetic and highly motivated individual with deep botanical knowledge and strong leadership, organizational, managerial, communication and interpersonal skills to fill the position of Curator.

### About San Francisco Botanical Garden Society

SFBGS works in partnership with the City and County of San Francisco Recreation and Park Department to manage and operate San Francisco Botanical Garden, whose 55 acres in Golden Gate Park include more than 8,000 different kinds of plants from around the world. The Garden, which is celebrating its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary, is known for its diverse, significant and unique plant collections.

SFBGS's twofold mission is to build communities of support for the Botanical Garden and to cultivate the bond between people and plants. With the help of its members, donors and volunteers, SFBGS funds Garden improvements, provides curatorial and plant collections management services, propagates plants for sale to the public, maintains the Helen Crocker Russell Library of Horticulture, offers year-round educational and community programming, operates the Garden Bookstore and Arbor (for plant sales), and annually welcomes more than 360,000 visitors from San Francisco, the Bay Area and all over the world.

### About the Position

SFBGS is in a time of transformation and growth and is currently implementing a staff reorganization to support the achievement of ambitious goals. The Curator is a newly defined

position that is essential to meeting these goals, as well as part of a broader transition in the leadership and management of the Garden's plant collections. The highly respected current curator has stepped down after 30 years of service to become part-time Curator Emeritus. SFBGS has restructured the Curatorial Department, redefining and realigning both the Curator and Associate Curator positions, and has recently filled the Associate Curator position. In addition, the Recreation and Park Department is hiring a new Garden Director, who will lead and guide the Garden's "blended" horticultural team within the framework of a 30-year agreement with SFBGS, signed in 2013, for shared management and operation of the Garden.

Shared management of the Garden means that SFBGS has primary responsibility for certain functional areas, with the obligation to collaborate with the City's Recreation and Park Department, and the City has primary responsibility for other functional areas, with the obligation to collaborate with SFBGS. SFBGS currently funds and staffs the curation, planning, management and documentation of the Garden's plant collections, including signage. Since the City has primary responsibility for the horticultural aspects of the Garden, SFBGS's curatorial and plant collection management staff work closely with City staff and, on many matters, under the leadership and guidance of the Garden Director in consultation with SFBGS's Executive Director. The Curator reports to SFBGS's Executive Director.

The Curator will work with the Garden Director to develop and curate the plant collections, including establishing plans and policies for each collection and helping to guide their implementation. The Curator will ensure that exemplary collections management protocols and best practices are followed, oversee the shift to using geographic information system (GIS) technology for collections mapping, expand the Garden's conservation role, support research, education and engagement with the Garden's collections, and supervise and mentor the Associate Curator, Plant Collections Registrar, Curatorial Assistants, and GIS Manager. The Curator also will supervise the Curator Emeritus.

Within the next four years, the Society will build a Nursery: Center for Sustainable Gardening (CSG) complex, the Garden's first permanent nursery, whose improved site location and facilities will enable staff and volunteers to maintain and expand plant propagation and growing activities. The CSG will be a LEED certified building with a green roof, a working nursery with a public orientation, designed to engage and educate visitors. The Curator will support the work of the Development office in raising funds for the Nursery: Center for Sustainable Gardening and for the Garden in general.

The Curator will play an important leadership role within SFBGS and the Garden. A member of SFBGS's Leadership Team, the Curator will participate in strategic decision making and take on certain leadership responsibilities that extend beyond the Curatorial Department.

SFBGS is looking for an individual who sees herself or himself as a builder; is committed to helping the Garden, which has one of the country's most significant and diverse botanical

collections, reach even higher levels of excellence; and is excited about the opportunity to work with dedicated staff to develop a strong team that will continue to strengthen and improve all aspects of the Garden's curatorial and plant collections management operations. The Curator should be able to think holistically and strategically about the Garden, as well as perform assigned functions, anticipate opportunities and needs for collaboration and coordination, lead and manage across functions, and act at all times, internally as well as externally, as an ambassador for SFBGS and the Garden. In addition, because this is a newly defined position at an organization in transition, the Curator should have patience, perseverance, flexibility and enthusiasm for improving systems, supporting and implementing organizational change, and supervising and mentoring staff.

### **Responsibilities:**

#### **Develop and curate plant collections**

- Under the leadership and guidance of the Garden Director, establish plans and policies for each plant collection and help to guide development and maintenance of the collections in keeping with established plans and policies.
- Advise and assist the Garden Director on the curatorial aspects of installation and renovation projects.
- Participate in project planning for new and existing gardens, coordinating with the Garden Director, city gardening staff, landscape designers and other contractors to define and enhance the identity of individual garden displays.
- In collaboration with the Garden Director and the Section Supervisor, advise and consult on the choice and placement of plant material, assisting gardeners, designers and contractors, and involving the Associate Curator, as appropriate.

#### **Document and manage collections**

- Ensure that information resources on collections are in accessible formats.
- Ensure that plants are correctly identified and accessions are appropriately documented in an effective database, with content, accessibility and functionality for all relevant staff and other audiences.
- Ensure that the Garden follows exemplary collections management protocols and best practices, with City gardening staff trained in these protocols and practices.
- Oversee shift to use of GIS technology for collections mapping, including training and implementation of online recordkeeping from the field.

#### **Oversee conservation initiatives**

- Oversee acquisition of living specimens of rare, unusual and unique plants appropriate for the Botanical Garden's collections through seed and plant exchange, trade or purchase.
- Oversee expansion of the Garden's conservation role, including registration of collections with appropriate organizations, participation in collection expeditions, and inter-institutional initiatives.

### **Support research, education and engagement with the Garden's collections**

- Respond, and oversee Curatorial Department responses, to requests for information, research and access from visiting researchers, horticultural professionals and other individuals.
- Represent the Garden at relevant conferences, symposia and meetings.
- Serve as a Garden ambassador to plant societies, horticultural community, donors, visitors and the general public.
- Write articles about the Garden's collections and perform technical editing to ensure that newsletters and other written materials published by the Garden are botanically accurate.

### **Provide leadership, supervision and mentoring**

- Manage and mentor the Associate Curator, Plant Collections Registrar, Curatorial Assistants, GIS Manager; supervise the Curator Emeritus.
- Develop and manage budgets and work plans, and, where appropriate, establish and track metrics to measure effectiveness of curatorial operations.
- Work closely with Learning and Engagement to develop interpretive offerings accessible to a diverse range of visitors.
- Work closely with Visitor Experience and Marketing to communicate a consistent message and ensure that a customer-service orientation and visitor-centric perspective are incorporated.
- Support the work of the Development office in raising funds for the Garden, including the Nursery: Center for Sustainable Gardening (e.g., by contributing to grant writing, meeting with donors, attending fundraising events, providing tours, and fostering relationships with donor, volunteers and the community).
- Serve on SFBGS Leadership Team to guide the implementation of institutional goals, and in that capacity, act as role model for all SFBGS staff.

### **Qualifications:**

- Master's degree or higher in botany or horticulture.
- At least five years curatorial experience in a botanical garden or similar setting, including experience managing and mentoring other staff, as well as performing the other responsibilities outlined for this position.
- Knowledge and experience with curatorial best practices, including using database(s) for collections management, is required; experience with FileMaker Pro is a plus.
- Deep botanical knowledge, complemented by horticultural understanding and experience with horticultural practice, is required.
- Knowledge and experience with mediterranean climate zone, cloud forest and other collections found at the Botanical Garden strongly preferred.
- Strong understanding of conservation best practices within the parameters of a public botanical garden strongly preferred.
- Experience working with volunteers and with a public partner also important.

### Expectations:

- Exceptional ability to share botanical knowledge with and inspire members, donors, staff, volunteers, visitors, colleagues and the general public, with sensitivity to their diverse levels of knowledge and experience.
- Ability to develop a multi-year vision for the Curatorial Department in the context of overall institutional goals, and to establish and meet near-term priorities that will advance these goals and vision.
- Ability to work effectively within a public-private partnership on a “blended” horticultural team.
- Ability to work across organizational functions and shift easily between big picture thinking and technical and operational details.
- Ability to manage organizational change and bring clarity and cohesion to a dedicated staff team, including establishing clearly defined roles and responsibilities.
- Ability to assess current operations, identify needed improvements, and work with and support staff to make them happen.
- Demonstrated ability to communicate effectively, both orally and in writing.
- Collaborative management style.
- Willing to take hands-on approach where needed.
- Must be available for evening, weekend and early morning events and programs as needed.
- Must be able to engage in a range of physical activity, including standing or sitting at a desk and computer, walking (sometimes on uneven surfaces) and working outside in varying weather conditions – all for extended periods of time. Must also be able to climb a flight of stairs and lift/carry objects up to 30 pounds.

**This list of responsibilities and expectations is not meant to be all-inclusive and may be expanded to include other responsibilities and expectations that management may deem necessary from time to time.**

### **HOW TO APPLY**

Please submit resume and cover letter outlining background, experience, interest and salary requirements via email, to [curator@sfbg.org](mailto:curator@sfbg.org). SFBGS hopes to fill the position as soon as possible. Interested applicants should apply at their earliest convenience. No phone calls please.

San Francisco Botanical Garden Society is an Equal Opportunity Employer and welcomes applications from individuals who will contribute to its diversity.