

Poison Garden Guiding

The Poison Garden is a very intriguing area of The Alnwick Garden and is extremely popular with thousands of visitors entering its gates annually since opening in 2005. Numbers have increased annually and 2015 was our busiest year to date, hence the need more volunteers.

The role of a Poison Garden Guide

- To gather together manageable groups of visitors (maximum 20 at any one time) conveying a warm welcome as they enter this enclosed area of The Alnwick Garden.
- As a Guide the first thing you have inform visitors about upon entering the Poison Garden is that they should not taste, smell or touch any of the plants and not wander off on their own.
- Once inside, the Guide explains how individual plants are harmful in a variety of ways to both humans and animals, some even fatal. This is certainly an area that is full of surprises to visitors as many have these plants may be growing in their own garden.
- When on duty you should contact a member of The Garden Staff or Duty Manager regarding any Health and Safety issues, accidents, non-operation of facilities or any another matters.

Points of contact

- Derek and Ann English are the coordinators of the Volunteer Poison Garden Guides in The Alnwick Garden.

Your commitment to The Alnwick Garden

- Poison Garden Guides, are expected to commit to 48 hours per annum (an average of 4 hours per month). Poison Garden Guides generally commit to 2/3 hours per session. Each Guide informs the Coordinators of the days of the week when they are available in order that a monthly rota can be drawn up and circulated.

General

- On arrival at The Alnwick Garden you must sign in at the time you start your volunteering session, likewise you must sign out at the end of each working session.
- An Alnwick Garden lanyard with an identity badge will be provided, this must be worn at all times when on duty. After a three month probationary period Volunteer Poison Garden Guides are issued with a Polo shirt. When necessary weatherproof jackets and umbrellas are also available.

Training

- Once your application has been accepted you will join us on a three month probationary period, during this time you will be provided with training working alongside one of the volunteers or staff.

Benefits

- After your three months probationary period, you will be offered a range of benefits, details of which will be provided at a later date.

Testimonial

Hello my name is Derek - I am a Poison Garden guide and Coordinator alongside my wife Ann. We have both been involved with The Alnwick Garden as Volunteers for 6 years after we retired from full time employment. I became a Poison Garden Guide straight away as I knew from the outset that that is what I wanted to be involved with. As a rookie guide the first thing to do is to get familiar with the various plants and their poison properties. This took 4 to 6 weeks of shadowing other volunteer guides and full time staff before I felt confident to 'go solo' and take small groups around the garden. Being a volunteer doesn't just involve guiding in the Poison Garden, but also engaging with visitors as they queue to enter, selling Poison Garden books about the plants and answering general questions (the most often asked is how to get to the Treehouse). Ann and I took on the role of Poison Garden coordinators after the previous coordinator retired in 2015. Ann does most of the work contacting volunteers so that the monthly rota's can be compiled and circulated to each one plus The Alnwick Garden Staff. I can thoroughly recommend being a Poison Garden volunteer. What nicer environment could you wish to be involved in?

Derek English