Dig In—to Our Garden Teams

Learn more: Volunteer Coordinator Yousef Rabhi: mbgna.volunteer@umich.edu or 734.647.8528.

Horticulture
Enjoy fresh air, exercise, beautiful settings, social connections, and hands-on learning. Activities include planting, weeding, mulching, pruning, and other seasonal garden maintenance. Weekly or a few times per month during the growing season April–October.

Gaffield Children’s Garden
Enjoy this playful space and help tend garden spaces such as veggie, herb, and butterfly gardens, fairy & troll knoll, and more. Must enjoy working in a kid-friendly atmosphere. Fridays, 9 am–noon.

Matthaei Garden Teams
Learn new gardening techniques while you help maintain a variety of unique display and exhibit gardens. Garden locations vary. Tuesdays, Wednesdays, & Thursdays, 9 am–noon.

Nichols Garden Team
Help maintain the horticultural collections at the Washington Heights entrance including the Peony Garden, Gateway Garden, Laurel Ridge, and heirloom climbing roses at the historic Nichols Arboretum: Mondays & Fridays, 9 am–noon.

Top: Volunteer Bharathi Krishnaswamy helps out in the Alexandra Hicks Herb Knot Garden at Matthaei. Bharathi is on the Tuesday Garden Team at Matthaei. Below: Matthaei-Nichols horticulture manager Mike Palmer (right) hosts a tour of the greenhouses last year for student volunteers from the University of Michigan Filipino American Student Association.

Natural Areas
Explore and learn more about the many natural areas, trees, trails, and native landscaping at the Arb and Gardens while helping out with seasonal maintenance.

Native Plant Team
Tend a variety of native landscapes at Matthaei including the Great Lakes Garden. Activities include general garden maintenance (April–September) and seed collection/propagation (October–March). Weekdays, AM/PM shifts.

Our Surveys Say…!
We’re eager to hear what our volunteers think about us and the volunteer programming here. To find out, we sent a climate survey to all volunteers last year to get their take on Matthaei-Nichols. Results of that survey will appear in our next newsletter. We’re also keen to know how many student workers and volunteers feel about the Arb and Gardens. Both groups—students and volunteers—enjoy a long history with the Arb and Gardens. We couldn’t do what we do without them!

To make sure that students remain an active part of our organization into the future we’ve set a goal to increase the number of student volunteers by 15% through improved recruitment and by deepening their volunteer experience. But how do we better understand what the students are looking for and what’s important to them? Those are questions we hope to answer after analyzing the results of a survey conducted with students last fall. We asked students questions such as how important it is for them to care for a natural area, whether working at Matthaei-Nichols helped lower their stress levels, and if they viewed volunteer work as a résumé builder.

No surprise: many of the students are nature lovers at heart. One student who helped with the project is University of Michigan undergrad Kayla Hobby. “While collecting surveys I found that students with a wide array of majors participate in our workdays, and the majority of them enjoy getting involved in nature and learning about our local plants and invasive species,” says Hobby, a freshman and major in Program in the Environment (College of Literature, Science & the Arts). “It’s great to see fellow students outdoors in their spare time.”

Stay tuned as we bring you results and analysis of this important student recruitment effort!