Get Involved! Volunteer at Matthaei-Nichols
Our volunteer program offers diverse opportunities to learn, connect, and give back. As a volunteer, you’ll develop new skills while supporting our mission of education and stewardship through hands-on service. We welcome new volunteers to join us in every season at the Arb & Gardens. Preregistration required for all trainings. Contact the Volunteer Coordinator for more information: 734.647.8528; yorabhi@umich.edu.

Visitor Services – Ambassador Trainings (preregistration required)

Michigan Solar House
Ambassador Training
Sat., April 2, 9 am–noon, Matthaei
The Michigan Solar House (MiSo) is a solar-powered home collaboratively designed and built by a team of students and faculty from U-M Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning for the 2005 Solar Decathlon in Washington DC. Now located at Matthaei, MiSo fosters public awareness in solar technology and serves as a laboratory for ongoing research. Volunteers are trained to greet and guide visitors to points of interest in the house on weekends, May–October.

Garden Ambassador Training
Two options: Wed., April 13 or Sat., April 16 (both at Matthaei), 9 am–4 pm
Training provides an introduction to the Visitor Services Dept., best practices for working with the public, and an overview of the most popular points of interest in the display gardens. Gaffield Children’s Garden and beyond. We seek volunteers with a love of learning and interest in working with a diverse population of visitors, including children and families. Monthly garden tours/talks are led by our horticulturists throughout the season. Shifts are available daily, May–October.

Peony Ambassador Training
Tues., April 26, 6–7:30 pm, Arb/Reader Center
Learn more about the largest public collection of heirloom herbaceous peony cultivars in North America. Ambassadors greet and guide visitors to points of interest in the peony garden during peak bloom time. The training session includes an overview of the peony collection history, horticultural basics and tips for working with the public. Ideal volunteers will have a genuine interest in the collection and an ability to work independently with a diverse array of visitors. Evening and weekend shifts available late May/early June.

Volunteer Spotlight: Pen Goff
Long time bromeliad collections volunteer Penrith (Pen) Goff has been on the Matthaei-Nichols volunteer team for nearly 16 years! Pen has been a core member of the bromeliad collections team, working regularly to groom, divide, and repot the bromeliads, selecting the showiest for display in the conservatory. What got him initially interested in Bromeliads? “I was born addicted to them,” he quipped.

Professional and/or volunteer background: I was a professor of German at Wayne State University from 1968 to 1994. During that time I grew (mostly) bromeliads. What inspired you to get involved at Matthaei-Nichols? I was active in the SE Michigan Bromeliad Society and one of our members, Aarne Lamsa, told me about his volunteer work with Roger Keller. I thought that would be just the thing for me. When did you get started? About 2000. How often do you volunteer? I used to come once a week but now it’s once every other week, weather permitting. What’s your favorite part about volunteering here? Working with the plants, volunteers, and Matthaei staff.

Fall 2015 Volunteer Appreciation Gathering
A huge thank you to our volunteers and staff in celebration of another abundant year of volunteer contributions at the Arb and Gardens!

Wow! Our volunteers work an impressive number of hours each year. Take a look:

- 362 regular volunteers logged over 12,800 hours of service.
- 1,096 volunteers (U-M students, community and corporate, private and public) helped with group workdays (a total of 3,910 hours!)
- 391 volunteers logged 1,237 hours with our student programs (Cultivating Community, Campus Farm, Wild About Nature) for a total of 957 hours

Grand Total: 1,850 Volunteers, 17,679 Hours!

Counterclockwise from top left:
Volunteer coordinator Yousef Rabhi warms up the crowd at this year’s well-attended event; the excellent culinary fare is as much a crowd-pleaser at these events as the camaraderie among the volunteers and staff; volunteers start to fill the auditorium as the event begins.

Visit our website for more information about our volunteer programs: mbgna.umich.edu.