



---

## Job Description

JOB TITLE:	Docent – Desert Garden	DATE:	October 2009
DEPARTMENT:	Education and Volunteers	CLASSIFICATION:	Volunteer

### WHAT IS A DOCENT?

The word docent comes from the Latin word "docere" meaning to teach. During the 1800s it was used to describe lecturers who were not on the salaried staff of an institution or a private/volunteer tutor. Today the term is used by many museums to describe the trained volunteers who provide educational services for the museum visitor. Other terms include tour guide, interpreter, and volunteer educator.

The interpretive or educational role of the docent is the most important and challenging aspect of the job. An effective docent does not lecture to an audience. Docents must actively involve visitors in the interpretation, giving them the tools of visual literacy. A docent helps the visitor attain some sort of "ownership" of the gardens, and helps them to find relevance to their own lives.

As interpreter, a docent is careful not to force value judgment or opinions on a visitor. In addition, a docent is sensitive to visitors' differences – in learning styles, cultural backgrounds, age level, and special needs. Today's Huntington audience is as varied as the plants in the gardens and requires open-mindedness, flexibility and respect.

### SUMMARY

The Desert Garden Docent works under the direction of the Curator of the Desert Garden, the Volunteer Programs Manager and closely with other volunteers. The Desert Garden Docent is an outgoing, people-focused individual primarily responsible for enhancing visitors' experiences in the Desert Garden and Desert Garden Conservatory. Duties include answering questions about the garden or conservatory during public hours, monitoring and facilitating use of the garden and conservatory and providing mini-tours of the gardens and conservatory.

### ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS

1. Greets and orients visitors in a courteous, prompt, and professional manner.
2. Enhances visitors' experience of the garden, including monitoring for safe use of facilities.
3. Assists in public programs.
4. Works in partnership with the Desert Garden Chairman, Co-chairman and docents to staff the Desert Garden and the Desert Garden Conservatory.
5. Under the supervision of the Curator, may contribute to the maintenance and upkeep of the Desert Garden and Desert Garden Conservatory

### QUALIFICATIONS

1. Interest in visitor-centered education.
2. Professional attitude and appearance.
3. Ability to work both independently and within a team.
4. Strong communication skills.
5. Sensitivity to working with diverse audiences.
6. Commitment to volunteering in the Desert Garden and conservatory a minimum of eight hours per month for two years. This commitment may be completed by providing four two-hour shifts per month .



REQUIREMENTS

1. Completes all appropriate Desert Garden Docent training.
2. Attends Desert Garden Review meetings and workshops and other program meetings as necessary.
3. Participates in yearly Desert Garden Docent re-certification.

WORKING CONDITIONS

Docent will work in the Desert Garden under year-round weather conditions. May require standing for up to two hours at a time. Docent must be physically able to get around a 200-acre site.

The above statements are intended to describe the general nature and level of work being performed by people assigned to this job. They are not intended to be an exhaustive list of all responsibilities, duties, and skills required of volunteers in this position.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Docent Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Docent Name – please print