Education and Outreach Specialist

The Oak Spring Garden Foundation (OSGF) seeks a creative, energetic, and enthusiastic educator to join the small and highly motivated OSGF team in a new role as Education and Outreach Specialist.

Overview of the Position

The primary goal of this new position is to engage with and support our local community, primarily in Fauquier County, with particular focus on working closely with audiences that are traditionally underserved. The Education and Outreach Specialist should be a self-starter who is able to design and implement educational programs that leverage OSGF’s unique resources, beginning with the Biocultural Conservation Farm (BCCF).

Key functions

The Education and Outreach Specialist will be based in the BCCF team and will report to the BCCF Manager, but will liaise closely with the other program teams at OSGF to create educational content, primarily on the OSGF estate, that leverages the unique resources of OSGF and compliments other programs already underway. We envisage that the successful candidate will work primarily with young people, including K-12 students, but that there will also be opportunities to develop programs that engage with adults, including retirees. The new position is well suited for an individual with educational experience in either formal or informal settings, such as schools, public gardens, museums, or other kinds of community organizations. Since OSGF programs are strongly focused on plants, gardens, and landscapes in the broad sense, including natural history, ecology and sustainable agriculture, relevant experience in one or more of these areas is essential.

Responsibilities will include

- Developing and maintaining relationships with local stakeholders in Fauquier County, including local educational and community organizations and especially Fauquier County Public Schools, through delivery of engaging, enjoyable, and educationally valuable programs.
- Working with local educators, artists and others to develop educational and outreach materials that complement OSGF’s activities and resources, such as Oak Spring’s landscape and conservation management efforts, the library, the formal garden, and the BCCF.
• Working with the BCCF to design educational content for K-12 students and others to learn about plants and especially sustainable agriculture, including how it intersects with art, as well as other disciplines in the humanities and sciences.

• Developing calls for proposals from local stakeholders, including Fauquier County teachers and students, to develop materials or activities that educate and inspire visitors about OSGF’s resources, including the landscape, garden, library and the BCCF.

• Creating workshops or activities in the arts and sciences that utilize specific plantings at the BCCF, such as the natural dye plot, or fiber and paper-making plots.

• Using the rare books, manuscripts and other materials from the Oak Spring Library to develop educational content, including developing programs that integrate the plantings at the BCCF with OSGF’s Library resources.

• Working with the Communications Team to develop virtual-learning activities that can be shared with Fauquier County Public Schools and other more distant audiences when circumstances constrain in person activities.

• Leading and assisting with the raising of funds from grants and other sources to support and expand OSGF’s educational and outreach activities.

• Write qualitative and quantitative reports that summarize educational programs at OSGF, in order to track and better understand the impact of OSGF’s educational and outreach activities.

• As time permits, working on the farm with the BCCF team to gain experience in, and understand, the different areas of the farm, which will be essential for developing educational and outreach materials that relate to the BCCF. Tasks may include: harvesting produce, weeding, planting, harvesting and processing seed, etc.

A Note About COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented many obstacles for the delivery of educational programs and other kinds of outreach, including in our local community. The primary goal of the Education and Outreach Specialist is to develop in-person opportunities for community members, including for students in the Fauquier County Public Schools, to connect with the resources offered at the Oak Spring Garden Foundation. This position will require flexibility and the ability to innovate, should the pandemic continue to constrain opportunities for in-person activities. Being able to creatively and effectively carry-out programs that offer virtual learning experiences, when needed, is a must.

Skills and Knowledge:

• A broad understanding of plants, agriculture and horticulture, and how these subjects overlap with the arts, humanities and sciences.

• A friendly demeanor, and a demonstrated ability to work with diverse student groups.

• Experience leading educational programs in a formal setting, such as a school or university, and/or in an informal setting, such as a museum, botanic garden or educational center for K-12 students.
The ability to conceive and implement new programs from start to finish. This should include post-program surveys and reports that summarize qualitative and quantitative outcomes of educational programs.

An interest in developing programs that highlight or work in support of the educational content currently offered at local schools and/or organizations.

Highly motivated self-starter able to work with minimal supervision.

Excellent oral and written communication skills.

A solution-oriented team player.

Proficient with Microsoft and Google Suites.

Ability to lift at least 50 pounds.

Ability to work in inclement weather

Eligibility:

- Three or more years of experience in a relevant educational setting.
- Must have a car and be able to legally drive in the US.
- Spanish fluency highly preferred.
- Experience in development or grant writing to support educational and outreach program is preferred.

Benefits: This is a full-time position with benefits, for two years in the first instance.

Start Date: We anticipate filling this position in time for a start date in early 2022, but we have some flexibility to adjust the timing to suit the needs of the successful applicant.

To Apply: Please email a resume, cover letter and 3 professional references to hr@osgf.org with the subject line “Education and Outreach Specialist”. Review of applications will begin on December 6th, 2021 and will continue until the position is filled.

About the Oak Spring Garden Foundation (OSGF) The Oak Spring Garden Foundation is a private operating foundation, located a little over an hour west of Washington, D.C. in the rural Virginia Piedmont between the Blue Ridge and Bull Run Mountains, on what was once the private residential estate of Paul and Rachel Lambert “Bunny” Mellon. A devoted horticulturist, gardener and collector, Bunny Mellon cultivated an impressive collection of books and art objects over the course of her life that now form the core of the collections of the Oak Spring Garden Library.

While the estate has a long and interesting history, OSGF is a young organization that has only existed in its current form for about six years. The Foundation’s mission is to inspire fresh thinking and bold action on the history and future of plants, horticultural practice, the art and culture of gardens and landscapes, and the importance of plants for human well-being. Its activities toward providing a public benefit include the sustainable management of a 700-acre landscape, as well as stewardship of the other legacies of Mrs. Mellon, which include an endowment, the formal garden, the library and substantial residential accommodation. The current President, Sir Peter Crane FRS, reports to a small but distinguished Board.

About the Biocultural Conservation Farm (BCCF) Our Biocultural Conservation Farm (BCCF) plays an important role in fulfilling the Oak Spring Garden Foundation mission. Founded at OSGF in spring of 2019, the Biocultural Conservation Farm’s current objectives are rooted in food production, conservation, and education. The primary goal of the BCCF is to supply fresh produce for the array of programs that take place onsite at OSGF. The BCCF team works closely with the OSGF Chef to supply
short-term and long-term guests with nourishing farm-to-table meals. Produce also supports a small Community Supported Agriculture ('CSA') program from May-October in which community members pick-up a curated share of fresh vegetables once a week across a 25-week season. Importantly, the BCCF is committed to donating at least 50% of what is grown on-site to local food banks. In 2020, this amounted to approximately 22,000 lbs of fresh produce. Given our geographic location and the agrobiodiversity and cultural foodways in our region, we are very interested in growing and perpetuating the cultivation of heirloom crops of regional cultural and historical significance. In addition to its high-intensity, ecological vegetable production the BCCF has growing plots dedicated to production of seed, as well as plants used by people for a variety of purposes, including natural dyeing, paper and fiber making, and medicine.

*Oak Spring Garden Foundation is an equal opportunity organization and will not allow discrimination based upon age, ancestry, disability, gender identity, national or ethnic origin, race, religious belief, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, political belief, or veteran status.*