

The Oxford Botanic Garden Herbarium Volunteers



About the Role

We are looking for a team of enthusiastic volunteers to help us show off a new exhibition of floral prints of plates from the 'Florilegium' of Mary Somerset, the first Duchess of Beaufort (1630 – 1715). Recently digitised by the Bodleian, the Florilegium is a collection of paintings, bound together, which illustrate the extraordinary variety of plants that Mary Somerset had grown from seeds sent to her from all over the world.

During the month of August these botanical works will be on display in the Herbarium Room at Oxford Botanic Garden. Volunteers will play a key role in enabling the Herbarium Room to open to the public as much as possible during this time and enable visitors to engage with the botanical works on display.

We wish to open the Herbarium Room daily 10 am – 5 pm between **Friday 1 – Thursday 31 August**. We are hoping to recruit a large team of volunteers to help cover **morning shifts (10 am – 1.30 pm)** and/or **afternoon shifts (1 pm – 5 pm)** each day. Volunteers will be helping on their own but with a radio to get support on the day from the wider Front of House Team. There is a half-hour overlap each day (1- 1.30 pm) so that volunteers can handover to each other and pass on tips and information.

Volunteers will be coordinated by The Garden and Arboretum Front of House Coordinator and people will be able to sign up flexibly to morning and afternoon slots throughout August, so this could suit somebody who wants a regular shift or something more flexible.

Training for Herbarium volunteers

This will take place **on Friday 25th July afternoon**. Digital copies of the training notes will also be available. The training session will include information about the Herbarium Room, about the display and about Mary Somerset. We will also explain to volunteers how to use the radio and discuss any practical questions about the role. After signing up for sessions, volunteers then work relatively independently to open the room without direct supervision on the day - with a radio to communicate with the Front of House Team.

Who are we looking for?

You'll be friendly, welcoming and eager to help visitors enjoy the Herbarium Room and learn more about the current exhibition. You don't already need to know anything about plants, or about Mary Somerset, but we hope that you will be keen to learn more about the exhibition content so that you can pass it on to visitors.

What you will be doing

You will be responsible for ensuring that visitors to the Herbarium Room get the most out of the experience whilst helping to maintain the safety of the visitors and the exhibits. You will engage with visitors and answer any questions that they may have about the exhibits. Your presence will also help to ensure that visitors adhere to the rules of the Herbarium Room, such as no food or drink inside, no handling of the displays, etc. At this stage we do not know how busy the Herbarium Room will be, because it has not been opened very often - volunteers might wish to bring something to read during quiet periods.

Why you might enjoy volunteering in this role

- join a friendly team at the Oxford Botanic Garden and enjoy being in a beautiful space
- build and share your knowledge of the Garden and of the exhibition contents
- a chance to meet visitors and make a difference to their day

Other Information

- This role will be coordinated by a member of staff who might not be present on the day you volunteer, although you will be able to ask Front of House team for support if needed.
- To volunteer in this role you must be 18 or over and eligible to volunteer in the UK.
- There are 2 steps up to the Herbarium Room but a ramp can be provided. Volunteers may also sit if needed, or when there are no visitors.
- Unfortunately there is no parking on site available to staff or volunteers.
- Travel expenses can be reimbursed (up to £5.00 per session).
- Volunteers new to onsite GLAM volunteering will need to be registered on the Volunteer Service mailing list (MyImpactPage.com), and the Volunteer Service will need to have received two references and done an ID check before volunteers can start in this role. The role does not currently require any additional checks.

More About the Herbarium Room

The Oxford University Herbaria is the oldest botanical scientific collection in the UK and was originally amassed at the Botanic Garden. Until the mid-nineteenth century, the Herbaria was one of the largest scientific collections of plants in the world. It contains material dating back to the early seventeenth century and its contents have influenced the use and planting of the Botanic Garden since the 1640s. These collections are now housed in the Department of Plant Sciences on South Parks Road but the collection's 'roots' are in the Garden. The Herbarium room is now used as an exhibition space intended to give the public an idea of the treasures once housed here. The August display has been curated by PhD student India Cole (whose thesis focused on Mary Somerset) and artist/designer Pia Ostlund, with oversight from the Oxford Botanic Garden Director, Simon Hiscock. As well as images from the Florilegium, it will feature images from the Duchess's Herbarium (housed as part of the Sloane Herbaria at the Natural History Museum). Reference will also be made to the Duchess's collaboration with Jacob Bobart the Younger (the second Keeper of the Oxford Physic Garden, now known as the Oxford Botanic Garden).



Next steps...

If you are interested in helping to open the Herbarium to visitors as a volunteer, then please **complete a form by [following this link](#) by Friday, July 11th**. Responses will be collated and sent on to the Herbarium volunteer role coordinator to review. They will respond to all applicants by Friday, 18th of July.

Information will be kept in accordance with our [Data Retention Schedule](#).