

# Palos Verdes School Gardens



Volunteer Handbook  
**2019 -2020**

# WELCOME

*Welcome School Garden Volunteer!*

*We greatly appreciate your decision to join us as a Palos Verdes School Gardens (PVSG) campus program volunteer. Volunteers are integral to the success of our edible education program and most importantly our volunteers demonstrate to the students the care and commitment of their larger school community. PVSG strives to provide the most rewarding experience possible for all of our volunteers.*

*We offer this handbook as a means of introducing you to the PVSG program and to our volunteer processes. We look forward to a rewarding relationship and are deeply grateful for your gift of time!*

*Warmly,*

*The PVSG Team*

# ABOUT US

## OUR MISSION

To promote edible education through implementing a whole-child educational model which teaches life skills, academics, citizenship, environmental stewardship and health in an outdoor garden classroom.

## OUR STRATEGY

Through teamwork, experience, and innovation we develop, test, document, and evaluate lessons and best practices.

Palos Verdes School Gardens (PVSG) is a program of Sustainable Palos Verdes Schools, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Founded in 2010, the program grew out of a conversation between like-minded parents and a supportive relationship with the school district, PTA boards, site administration, teachers and grounds staff.

Now in its ninth year of development, PVSG reaches over 10,000 Pre K, elementary and middle school students in five school districts annually in an outdoor garden classroom. As a model program, PVSG has inspired seed-to-table projects throughout the Palos Verdes Peninsula community and beyond. PVSG understands that strong nonprofit organizations build strong communities and is committed to creating sustainable community partnerships to reinforce that understanding through their edible education model. PVSG is currently the only Palos Verdes Peninsula organization dedicated to supporting all public and private school garden programs through educational programming, partnerships, policy, awareness

and capacity building strategies. PVSG includes over 50 partnership organizations, representing every part of the Peninsula nonprofit and private business sector and beyond — these partnerships include public and private schools, restaurants, local markets, environmental, art and health organizations, public libraries and eco-resorts. PVSG also collaborates with several nationwide school garden nonprofits to assure implementation of timely and relevant curriculum and development of sustainable practices and relationships to service the students and families of its program communities through edible education.

The PVSG Outdoor Classroom program is dedicated to providing every student with a world class edible education experience in a school garden outdoor classroom setting. Through thoughtfully planned seasonal lessons we encourage the development of healthy lifestyle choices, create experiential connections to the natural world and help students develop a lifetime love of learning. Our program encourages students and teachers to consider the school garden as an extension of the traditional classroom rather than an extracurricular activity. The Outdoor Classroom is seen as a living laboratory, where lessons support and enhance academic excellence and achievement, encourage inquiry-based learning and provide hands-on experiential learning opportunities. The PVSG curriculum is tied to CA state standards and supports Next Generation Science Standards.

Our campus based program gives students the opportunity to develop life skills as they learn about healthy foods and the natural world in a vibrant and active outdoor classroom environment. Curiosity is awakened by the genuine interaction with nature. As part of their grade level experience each week, students will have opportunity to collaborate with their peers, write and draw what they experience in their garden journals, taste seasonal and local produce, plant, tend to and harvest their school garden beds and develop a greater understanding and passion for environmental stewardship and regenerative ecology.

# VOLUNTEER EXPECTATIONS

## **SCHEDULE**

Your garden schedule will be managed through Google Calendar or Sign Up Genius. You will have access to the dates and times of the lessons as well as the lesson subjects and seasonal tasting lists at the start of the school year. Please consider bookmarking this address on your computer. Volunteer sign-ups are managed by the Garden Chair and Classroom Garden Representatives. Volunteers should check the calendar 24 hours before your scheduled class. If a scheduling change arises less than 24 hours before your class, your Garden Chair will make every effort to reach you in a timely manner to advise you of the change. Lessons take place rain or shine. If weather does not safely and comfortably allow for outdoor lessons you will meet your class at their campus classroom or other predetermined location.

## **SIGNING IN AND OUT**

Each time you come to volunteer, please sign in at the school office, get your name badge, stow your personal belongings, silence your cell phone and wash your hands. Please also sign out before you leave if your campus requires it.

## **ABSENCES**

If you are a Classroom Garden Representative that is not able to make your scheduled lesson time, please try to solicit a replacement volunteer and contact your Garden Chair 48 hours in advance, in order for them to assist you with filling your open volunteer slot. Because volunteers are such an important part of the success of the garden lesson, we ask that you do your best to attend each lesson and miss no more than one of the five lessons you have signed up for during the school year.

## **DISCIPLINE**

Your role as a volunteer is to engage with the students and contribute to a positive learning environment. School site staff members will handle all disciplinary actions according to the standards set forth by the site administrator. Please notify the student's classroom teacher if there is a behavioral issue that requires their attention.

## **COMMUNICATION**

We strive for effective communication and feedback between the PVSG team and program volunteers. You might be emailed a feedback form to complete after your after volunteering. You can also access and use that same form to submit feedback at any point. Additionally, feel free to email your campus Garden Chair at any time with any questions, concerns, issues, or feedback. They are the main liaison between our program and the school.

If needed, we are happy to debrief after class in person but may not have time to do so completely. We can always continue these conversations through email or over the phone. You should expect feedback on your work here in person, or after class by email. Remember that we are all growing and learning together to do our best for our students.

## **PVSG CULTURE PRINCIPLES**

- Mission and strategy is the metric
- Model professionalism
- Make learning fun
- Work collaboratively with the community
- We are all students
- Cherish feedback and offer it responsibly
- Be respectful and kind

## **ABOUT OUR VOLUNTEER PROGRAM**

In the PVSG outdoor classroom, our volunteer program is integral to the maintenance, health, and production of our organic garden as well as providing vital assistance in helping classes run smoothly and ensuring that all students have the opportunity to connect with an adult who will support their educational experience in the outdoor classroom. We strive to use our volunteers in the most productive and efficient way for our educational garden setting. Our volunteers help us maintain the infrastructure and support for the success of our program. There are several different ways to engage as an PVSG program volunteer. Volunteers are supported by PVSG team to carry out duties efficiently and independently.

The positions are as follows:

- GARDEN CHAIR
- LEAD CLASSROOM GARDEN REPRESENTATIVE
- OUTDOOR CLASSROOM VOLUNTEER
- GARDEN MAINTENANCE VOLUNTEER

### **GARDEN CHAIR**

There is typically one Garden Chair per school or two Co-Chairs. The Garden Chair is the main liaison between PVSG and the school community. They act as the point person between the Garden Teacher and site administration, PTA/Booster leadership, teaching staff and classroom volunteers. The Garden Chair recruits a Lead Classroom Garden Representative for each classroom on campus who will bring two additional Outdoor Classroom Volunteers to each of the five 30-minute grade level lessons per year. The Chair also oversees volunteer scheduling in collaboration with Class Reps to support the PVSG Garden Teacher with directed volunteer task management duties on garden lesson days.

## CLASSROOM GARDEN REP

The Class Garden Rep is the main garden lesson contact in the classroom. They receive lesson updates from the Garden Chair and forward on to their classrooms, attend five 30-minute garden lessons per year, recruit two additional classroom volunteers for each garden lesson via an online sign up and assist in advising families of the tasting ingredients at least one week in advance of lesson date in order to give sufficient time to respond timely with allergy and intolerance issues so that the garden team is able to make appropriate substitutions if necessary. Annual lesson tasting lists are provided at start of the program, but availability might change the ingredients as we source produce locally and seasonally.

## OUTDOOR CLASSROOM VOLUNTEER

In the PVSG outdoor kitchen prep area, our volunteer program is integral to the student outdoor classroom experience. Our volunteers help to engage and support inquiry based learning opportunities via lesson activities, journaling and seasonal garden tastings as well as assisting with set up and clean up tasks that allow for the PVSG team to provide the experience of an interactive discussion, give exposure to a seasonal and educationally relevant tasting of garden produce and conduct classes efficiently within a 30-minute time frame.

Kitchen prep volunteers can expect to perform a variety of tasks as needed to support the PVSG team including following the posted ***Food & Allergy Best Practices***, preparing and serving the weekly garden tasting items and encouraging the students to be open to trying new and different foods. Tasks will be listed by category in order of how they fall within the 30-minute lesson. If you are unsure how to complete a job, you can check the supporting resources posted at the site. If you are still unsure, you can ask the teaching team for help. If your shift covers the first or final class of the day you will be asked to help with the set up or end of day clean up tasks as well.

## GARDEN VOLUNTEER DUTIES

- Sign in at main office, get name badge, stow belongings, silence cell phones and wash your hands. Please sign out before you leave. Have a current TB test on file with school office.
- Attends 30-minute garden lesson as a Classroom Garden Volunteer as well as any required PVSG trainings/meetings.
- Oversees lesson duties assigned by Class Garden Rep including garden tastings, lesson set-up/clean-up, journaling, planting, photography, harvesting and garden maintenance.
- Your assistance will be most required during Food Prep, Activities & Journaling.
- Please arrive 10 minutes before your scheduled class time for prep. Also, allow ample time in the kitchen prep area after for clean-up, as there will be often be other classes to prepare for. Garden/Kitchen must be left clean and all supplies put back in their place.
- Help keep the children engaged & attentive during garden class lessons. Your role as a volunteer is to engage with the students and contribute to a positive learning environment.
- School staff members will handle all disciplinary actions according to the standards set forth by the site administrator.
- Please refrain from only engaging with your own child or socializing with other parents/teachers in a way that takes valuable interactive time away from our students.
- Prepare and serve the Tastings. Encourage students to use all of their senses!
- Tastings: 'Don't Yuck My Yum' & 'You Can't Taste with Your Eyes'. Use them every time - you will be amazed how encouraging it is!
- Help teach kids by reminding them to take care of the Garden (respect the garden, clean up trash if you see it, do not pick anything from the garden unless in class or instructed by garden team).
- All garden/cooking supplies will be set out by the Garden Teacher. Please be sure to thoroughly wash all cooking utensils/bowls and make sure kitchen area is neat and tidy.
- Please be respectful during the lesson. Try not to talk to each other, check emails etc.
- Most importantly, if you will be absent, please be responsible for covering your class. You may need to ask your Classroom Garden Representative to send an email to your class, but it's up to you to get coverage and to inform us. We ask that you miss no more than one of the weekly lessons you have signed up for during the school year.

## FOOD & ALLERGY BEST PRACTICES

Review the following guidelines to stay in compliance with all school garden requirements. Fresh garden produce is nutritious and delicious and is often eaten raw, so it's important to prepare raw fruits and vegetables with food safety in mind.

### ***PREPARING & SERVING***

- If you have been sick with a communicable illness 48 hours prior to your garden lesson, please choose to refrain from handling food.
- Always wash hands before handling raw fruits and vegetables. Before the start of the garden lesson, all volunteers must wash their hands with warm water and soap even if they will not be handling produce. Disposable gloves will also be provided for food preparation if requested.
- Clean the surface area around the sink where the produce will be prepped. Use a clean cutting board and keep knives away from student access at all times.
- Rinse fresh fruits and vegetables under cool, running, clean tap water even if you don't eat the skin or rind.
- Never use soap, detergent, or bleach solutions to wash fruits and vegetables. These products are not meant for washing produce and may not be safe to ingest. They can also adversely affect the flavor.
- Be sure to wash your hands (as well as the knife and cutting surface) before preparing ready to eat produce. Avoid cross-contamination when preparing fruits and vegetables. Clean work surfaces, utensils, and hands before and after handling fruits and vegetables. Diluted household bleach (1 teaspoon in 4 cups of room temperature water) is safe and effective for sanitizing work surfaces.
- Never prepare any food at home or outside of school. All food must be prepared on site. Only prepare tasting for your own classroom. Do not make extras for next class.
- Ensure kitchen contact surfaces are cleaned and sanitized before and after working with garden produce (including cutting boards, knives, utensils, and storage and serving containers).
- Never use serving materials or produce that have been exposed to unsanitary conditions. ***When in doubt, throw it out.***
- Keep all food handling materials in a sealed bin. Materials must be completely dry before storing.
- Store all garden produce in a cooler bag or cover and place in the shade when not in use. Compost all leftover tasting materials not eaten.

## **FOOD HANDLING & ALLERGY / INTOLLERANCE**

- Classroom Volunteers must read and understand **Food & Allergy Best Practices** and work with Garden Teacher and Garden Chair to provide suggested substitutions or omissions for each lesson.
- Garden Chair will work with school nurse and/or class teacher to determine which students have known food concerns that will need special attention. ***A listing of the specific garden tastings for the school year will be sent to all classroom parents by email.***
- Individuals that will require additional food selection will provide email and phone number contact info to Garden Chair and Classroom Garden Representative.
- Chair will email parents of children with any special food requirements one week prior to EACH lesson to communication substitutions or omissions and Chair will receive a written response confirming the food decisions made to share with the Garden Teacher.
- In the case of a substitute volunteer due to absence, substitute volunteer must review allergy policies and be able to identify the students with allergies.

## A CULTURE OF COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

PVSG celebrates the extraordinary generosity of our community partnerships including our school PTA/Booster Clubs, restaurant partners, and many other nonprofit, business and individuals! Our community members enable our programs to thrive and grow by supporting the organization with volunteer time, financial support, professional expertise, and passionate enthusiasm.

As on-campus volunteers who dedicate your time to our program and are able to experience our edible education lessons alongside the students, you have a special understanding of our organization's impact and the importance of everything that has been invested in this work. We welcome your ideas for how to grow and cultivate PVSG's community of supporters through your networks, and we hope you will invite friends, family members, and colleagues to come for a tour, attend our community events, learn more about us on our website and join you in sharing your passion for education, food, our children and greater community with PVSG.

-  General Information – [pvschoolgardens.org](https://pvschoolgardens.org)
-  Instagram: [@pvschoolgardens](https://www.instagram.com/pvschoolgardens) Facebook: Palos Verdes School Gardens
-  Monthly Volunteer Opportunities – email [admin@pvschoolgardens.org](mailto:admin@pvschoolgardens.org)
-  In Kind Gifting of Tools, Materials or Other - [pvschoolgardens.org/donate](https://pvschoolgardens.org/donate)

or by mail to:

Sustainable Palos Verdes Schools

PO Box 2653

PVP, CA 90274

*Sustainable Palos Verdes Schools is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization as recognized by the Internal Revenue Service EIN # 27-4262173.*