

Adopt-a-Park Volunteer Handbook

Program Overview

About Adopt-a-Park

Welcome to the City of Forest Grove's Adopt-a-Park program! The City of Forest Grove believes in and values volunteer service. Volunteers help keep our city strong; they foster community involvement and ownership, strengthen community ties, and help our City do more.

Volunteers in our Adopt-a-Park program help keep Forest Grove parks and green spaces beautiful, safe, clean, and environmentally sustainable by helping remove litter and maintain City parks and green spaces. Less litter and graffiti translates into a safer, more welcoming environment and helps protect wildlife, which might mistake trash for food (and starve to death). Manually pulling weeds prevents additional use of pesticides, making a healthier environment for us all. Removing invasive plants helps preserve the environmental integrity of our parks and green spaces, so native plants and animals can thrive.

In addition, cleaner parks and green spaces benefit our community by attracting economic investment and less criminal activity.

Finally, by donating their efforts and time, Adopt-a-Park volunteers free up time for our busy Parks & Recreation staff, helping them accomplish more. In short, Adopt-a-Park volunteers contribute significantly to the City, the community, and the environment.

About Forest Grove Parks & Recreation Department

Currently four full-time staff persons in the Parks & Recreation Department tend to City parks, trails, and open spaces; the Department also hires seasonal help for the summer. Parks & Recreation maintains 357 acres of parkland and open space within City limits, including nine City parks. To meet the leisure needs of all community members, the City parks offer a variety of amenities, including trails, picnic tables, playgrounds, barbecues, skateboarding facilities, basketball courts, softball courts, and tennis courts. City parks are used for celebrations, recreational and sporting activities, family and organizational gatherings, and simply as attractive places to enjoy the outdoors.

As an indication of the high level of use City parks receive, in 2009 a total of 601 families, groups, or organizations made reservations to use City parks for special events or celebrations, and 9,781 people participated in sports league games held at City parks. Similarly, in 2008, there were 582 reservations and 9,950 sports league game participants.

In addition, City residents use City trails to walk, jog, bike, and exercise dogs. The trails provide residents space to meet and enjoy nature in their busy suburban lives. Trails are used by families, students, children and senior citizens, and all ages in between.

How do volunteers get started?

Prospective volunteers should complete an Adopt-a-Park application and return it to the Volunteer Coordinator, 1924 Council St, P.O. Box 326, Forest Grove, OR 97116.

If there is an opening that matches your group's interests and schedule, the Volunteer Coordinator will schedule a meeting with you to go over volunteer and program details.

During your first period of volunteer service, the Volunteer Coordinator will provide an orientation to give you the information you need for a successful, rewarding volunteer experience.

What parks/green spaces can be adopted?

Fernhill Wetlands
Thatcher Park
Forest Glen Park
Reuter Farms green space
Knox Ridge Park
Forest Gale Heights entrance,
North entrance to Forest Grove
East entrance to Forest Grove

Program Policies & Procedures

General Statement of Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities

Volunteers shall be extended the right to be given meaningful assignments, the right to effective supervision, and the right to recognition for work accomplished. In return, volunteers shall agree to perform their duties actively to the best of their abilities. They are also expected to act in accordance with all appropriate codes, laws, regulations, and policies, regardless of whether they are set by the City or outside regulatory bodies.

Adopt-a-Park Responsibilities: Work Plans and Basic Tasks

When your group gets started, you and the Volunteer Coordinator will agree on a Work Plan detailing the specific tasks for your adopted site. Adopt-a-Park volunteers commit to this work plan and to volunteer their services on a regular basis according to the specific work schedule agreed upon by the City and park/green space adopters. Some parks or green spaces involve monthly volunteer service; others require less-frequent service.

Typical Adopt-a-Park volunteer tasks include the following:

- Removing litter
- Pulling weeds

- Removing invasive plants
- Spreading bark dust
- Planting flowers
- Reporting safety hazards, graffiti, and suspicious activity

Basic vs. Advanced Tasks

Please confine your monthly service to the tasks outlined in your Work Plan, or tasks such as litter removal, minor weeding, sweeping parking lots and pathways, and reporting safety hazards, illegal dumping, or suspicious or criminal activity. These tasks generally do not require prior approval or supervision from Parks & Recreation staff.

However, please note that certain more advanced tasks require approval and/or supervision from Parks & Recreation. These projects might also require additional training and/or equipment. These tasks include:

- Planting trees, flowers, shrubs, etc.
- Removing plants not specified in your group's Work Plan
- Major pruning or trimming
- Painting (e.g., over graffiti)

Sometimes there are volunteer opportunities for more advanced tasks. If you are interested in performing an advanced task at your park or green space, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator.

Liability Waiver

All volunteers 18 years or older must complete a liability waiver. Volunteers under 18 must have permission from a parent or legal guardian to participate in the Adopt-a-Park volunteer program.

Group Spokespersons

Each Adopt-a-Park group must designate a group spokesperson. Group spokespersons are responsible for training new members in their tasks and program guidelines and submitting completed volunteer timesheets. Group spokespersons must ensure that parents or legal guardians permit volunteers under 18 to participate in the Adopt-a-Park program and that parents/legal guardians complete a liability waiver that gives permission. Group spokespersons also serve as the primary contact person between the group and the Volunteer Coordinator.

Time Sheets

The Volunteer Coordinator will provide a timesheet for each adoptive group. Volunteers should use the timesheets to track their volunteer service and report total hours to the Volunteer Coordinator by the fifth day of each month; email is the preferred method of reporting monthly total hours. Completed timesheets (e.g., when there is no space left for volunteers to sign in) should be returned to the Volunteer Coordinator at 1924 Council St, P.O. Box 326, Forest Grove, OR, 97116.

The City of Forest Grove documents this information and tabulates total yearly hours. This helps us determine the level of volunteer participation, which helps us assess the Adopt-a-Park program. Tracking volunteer participation is also useful for budget purposes. In addition, the use of timesheets assists students who are required to perform community service hours.

Tools and Supplies:

During your first volunteer service event and orientation, we will provide you with trash bags and gloves. With advance notice, tools such as rakes, hoes, and brooms, and litter sticks (“litter picker-upper”) are usually available. Please contact the Volunteer Coordinator if you would like to arrange to borrow tools.

Liability Protection and Insurance Coverage

Adopt-a-Park volunteers are not covered by the City’s insurance policy or by workers’ compensation. We strongly encourage volunteers to ensure they have their own personal health insurance.

Recognition

When an individual or group commits to adopting a park or green space, following the group’s orientation and first service event, the Volunteer Coordinator will distribute a media release about the adoption to the local newspaper. In addition, at the site of the adopted park or green space, the City will place an adoption plaque with the name of the adopting group, indicating that that group has adopted the site. Adoption signs remain posted as long as the adoptive group actively volunteers in the Adopt-a-Park program. The City also maintains a list of adopted sites and adopters on the City website.

Reporting accidents and suspicious activity

In case of an accident or if a volunteer is injured while performing volunteer service in the Adopt-a-Park program, the volunteer should complete an injury/incident report form and return it to the Volunteer Coordinator within 24 hours of the accident or receiving the injury.

- Please report suspicious or illegal activity, dead wild animals, needles, illegal dumping, and graffiti to the Volunteer Coordinator at (503) 992-3302 or to Parks staff at (503) 992-3204.
- If you see a dead pet animal or a stray cat/dog, please call Washington County Animal Services at (503) 846-7041
- If you see a young child unattended, please call non-emergency Washington County dispatch at (503) 629-0111.
- In case of an emergency, please call 911.

Parks & Recreation Schedule and Holidays

Parks & Recreation staff typically work 7:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. Monday-Friday. During the summers there is also often a staff person on Saturday.

Parks & Recreation is closed on the following holidays observed by the City:

New Year's Day
Martin Luther King Jr. Day
Memorial Day
Independence Day
Labor Day
Veteran's Day
Thanksgiving Day
Day after Thanksgiving
Christmas

If a holiday falls on a Sunday, it will be observed on the following Monday. When a holiday falls on a Saturday, it will be observed on the previous Friday.

Volunteer Retirement

When you are no longer able to volunteer in your park or on your trail, please send a letter of resignation to the Volunteer Coordinator.

Important Contact Information

Kari Middleton, Volunteer Coordinator: (503) 992-3302
Steve Huffman, Parks Crew Chief: (503) 816-9872
Parks Shop: (503) 992-3204
Mindy Laird-Garcia, Weekend Parks Staff: (503) 816-9872
City of Forest Grove (general line): (503) 992-3200

General Safety Guidelines

To help ensure a safe volunteer experience, Adopt-a-Park volunteers are required to abide by the following guidelines:

Do's

- Wear weather-appropriate and protective gear (e.g., long pants, sturdy work shoes, and work gloves).
- Be respectful of pedestrians, cyclists, and other park/green space users.
- Contact Parks & Recreation staff immediately if you notice a safety hazard
- Lift all objects with your legs, not your back.
- Work with a partner whenever possible.
- Carry a small first aid kit.
- Have at least one adult supervisor for every five minors.
- Tie leaf/trash/clippings bags tightly
- Use sunblock or wear a hat.
- Be cautious of poisonous plants, such as poison oak.
- Make sure that all volunteers in your business or organization are familiar with these safety precautions.



Poison Oak

Don'ts

- If park workers are present doing their job, please don't run in front of them or get too close when they are working with a machine.
- Avoid blocking pathways and trails
- Don't overexert yourself. Be sure to take breaks and drink liquids.
- Don't bring small children or pets along on projects unless they can be closely supervised.
- Don't leave children or pets locked in the car at work locations.
- Don't stomp on bags. Injuries may occur from broken glass or sharp objects.
- Don't pick up materials you suspect might be hazardous, such as needles or drug paraphernalia. Call Washington County non-emergency dispatch at (503) 629-0111 and give the precise location of the material.
- Don't pick up dead animals
- Where applicable, don't enter creek bank and creek areas.

Specific Task Guidelines

Litter Removal

General

Always wear work gloves, and please tie bags tightly before disposal

What Not to Pick Up

Please don't pick up materials that you suspect might be hazardous, such as needles, bloody objects or drug paraphernalia. If you find such objects, please call non-emergency Washington County dispatch at (503) 629-0111. In addition, if you have personal items that have apparently been lost or abandoned, please leave them where they are; if there are many such items (e.g., a backpack full of things), please contact Parks staff at (503) 816-9872 or (503) 992-3204.

Small Stuff Matters

Sometimes one doesn't notice litter until one makes a point of looking—only then does one realize there are cigarette butts and lots of small pieces of paper and plastic. These small pieces of trash matter just as much as the big pieces. Small pieces can be ingested by wild animals, which might mistake them for food (and then starve to death). Chemicals from cigarette butts can leach out when wet, enter storm drains, and ultimately rivers and streams, where they can harm the water supply, as well as animals and the environment. When removing litter, please pay just as much attention to the small stuff as the big stuff.

Recycling

We encourage recycling when feasible. If you would like to take recyclables home and recycle them yourself, you are welcome to do so; otherwise, please bag recyclables and leave them in the visible and designated trash/recyclable pick-up spot at your adopted site. Please separate recyclables (glass, plastic, and aluminum), i.e. put them in different bags.

Trash bags

Please do not stomp on trash bags. Stomping can cause sharp objects to puncture the bag. During your orientation, the Volunteer Coordinator will designate a spot at your adopted site to leave trash bags. When you have finished weeding and/or picking up litter, please tie the bags and leave them in the designated spot. Parks staff will pick them up.

Weed Removal

What's a Weed?

In the words of our Parks supervisor, a weed is any plant that's growing where you don't want it. Plants (weeds) to be removed are designated by your Work Plan. Before removing other plants, volunteers should check with the Volunteer Coordinator or Parks staff.

How do I get rid of weeds?

In a word—manually. To protect the health of the environment, volunteers are not permitted to spray or apply chemicals in City parks or green space. In addition, volunteers should not use power equipment. Using weeding tools such as trowels is encouraged.

What do I do with the weeds I've pulled?

Please bag the weeds and leave them in the designated spot at your adopted site. Parks staff will pick them up.

Removing English Ivy



Why does it matter?

A non-native plant, English ivy threatens the health of native plants and wildlife. Unchecked, it can kill native trees, strangling them at their base; its weight renders trees more vulnerable to wind damage and disease; its vines can prevent the tree from adequately leafing out (in which case the tree dies). By aggressively growing along the ground as well as on trees, English ivy prevents native plants from growing, reducing the available habitat for native wildlife (notably, however, English ivy does provide habitat for rats).

How do I get rid of it?

Here are excellent instructions from The Ivy Files at Portland

Parks & Recreation:

"Girdle" - The most basic technique to stop tree-climbing ivy dead in its tracks.

Once you have located a tree infested with ivy, use either loppers or a pruning saw to cut through each vine clinging to the tree trunk at shoulder height and at ankle height. This severs the connection between the life sustaining roots and the rest of the ivy. Be sure to cut ALL vines as even one can continue to nourish ivy higher up the tree. Strip the Ivy away from the tree between the two cuts - some vines can be so big that you need to pry them away from the tree - just be careful not to damage the bark. Toss the stripped section of vine or save one or more as a trophy - how will

your friends believe that you cut away a vine as big as your arm without the proof? Recheck the 'girdled' area for any thin vines which may have grown under the tree's bark and you're finished but after all that work, you don't want to give Ivy a head start by leaving it to grow next to the base of the tree...

Full Lifesaver - After girdling a tree work to clear the surrounding area of ivy.

Imagine a 6-foot radius circle around the tree you have girdled; begin by peeling back the ivy mat 6 feet from the tree and thoroughly pull every vine and root from the circle. You may also find it helpful to cut "slices" in the ivy mat within your imaginary circle and rip out ivy like a piece of pie. If you are working on a slope, pull downhill and let gravity work with you.

Research has shown the once ivy has been pulled more than 6 feet away from a tree it will continue to grow away from the tree rather than towards it again in most cases. Our field tests have shown that a good 6+ foot Lifesaver will slow the re-infestation of a tree for over 5 years! The keys to an effective Lifesaver are consistency and patience; all vines and roots must be removed.

Log Roll - This method is most effective in areas with a serious ivy problem, and when used properly can be quite efficient and gratifying.

Begin by designating the area to be log rolled (a hillside or group of infested trees). Mark the top perimeter by cutting a line in the ivy mat, be sure to get every vine! If you are on a slope, cut horizontally across the slope to allow the ivy mat to be pulled downhill. Start to lift the mat and pull the cut edge of the vines downhill, rolling the ivy mat over itself. Let gravity do most of the work but also be aware of your surroundings unless you regularly perform backwards somersaults. Scan for native plants that may make rolling difficult and cut a line in the ivy perpendicular to your pulling edge so that the vine mat can be pulled around; this saves native plants that might otherwise have been uprooted by the thick mat and makes the log roll much more manageable.

If you find yourself with a stuck roll proceed to divide the log into several pieces and slice out the remaining perimeter. Once you have accumulated a few large ivy logs they must be mulched to ensure the ivy does not re-sprout; thoroughly chop, mince, and dice your logs and spread the mulch back over the area. While spreading mulch search for any small roots and vines they may have been left. Remember it only takes one vine to reestablish the infestation."

Removing Invasive Blackberry

Why does it matter?

A non-native plant, Himalayan blackberry threatens the health of native plants and wildlife. The aggressive growth of Himalayan blackberry crowds out native plants, creating "monocultures" and reducing biodiversity. For example, fewer native plants mean less habitat for native wildlife and less root structure in soil. That, in turn, contributes to erosion, which can harm water quality, as well as animals living in streams and rivers.



How do I get rid of it?

For large areas of blackberries, Parks and Recreation might use pesticides as the most effective means of getting rid of them. Volunteers should not use pesticides, however, and for smaller areas blackberry can be removed by hand. Blackberries have thorns; be sure to wear long pants, a shirt with long sleeves, and gloves! Blackberry bushes should be cut down and removed by the root. Note that the root crowns of blackberries can be somewhat large (for example, eight inches in diameter), and these need to be removed from the ground for effective blackberry control.

Removing Invasive Holly

Why does it matter?

Like other non-native plant species, invasive holly aggressively competes with native plants. It can crowd out native plant species, reducing biodiversity and decreasing habitat available for native wildlife. A prickly plant, when it grows in parks and green spaces, it also makes for a less inviting place to visit.

How do I get rid of it?

If a holly plant is small and the soil is relatively soft, the holly can likely be dug out or pulled from the ground. Cut larger holly trees at the base (Parks and Recreation staff can perform any necessary follow up).

