Volunteer Position Description

The Washington Rare Plant Care and Conservation Program is dedicated to conserving Washington's native rare plants through methods including ex situ conservation, rare plant monitoring, research, reintroduction, and education.

Position Title: Seed Collector

Location: Statewide

Report to: Wendy Gibble, Program Manager
Jennifer Youngman, Program Coordinator

Summary of Position: Rare Care constructed the Miller Seed Vault in 2003 to store seeds from rare native plants and plants of horticultural significance under optimal environmental conditions for future use in conservation and research. Ex-situ conservation of seeds safeguards against the possible loss of a rare plant species or individual population by banking the genetic resources of individual populations for future use in reintroductions. Seed collectors are responsible for conducting all site visits to establish seed availability and ripeness, collecting seeds, and delivering seeds and seed collecting report to Rare Care.

Benefits: Observe wild populations of some of the rarest plants in Washington and learn about the ecosystems they rely on. Deepen your commitment to conservation of biodiversity and at the same time visit some of the state’s premier native ecosystems. Learn about collecting seeds from wild plants and develop an understanding of seed ecology.

Essential Responsibilities:

- Attend a required 1-day training session on seed collecting in the spring.
- Survey, document, collect seeds from a rare plant population selected from a list of seed collecting priorities maintained by Rare Care.
- Conduct preparatory research on accessing the site of the rare plant population, on key diagnostic features of the target species, and on determining what the ripe seeds looks like.
- Arrange for your own transportation for the site visit.
- Ship or deliver seeds to Rare Care as soon as possible after they are collected in order to preserve the integrity of the seeds.
- Submit a completed seed collection form for each assignment within a month after the site visit is completed.

(over, please)
Complete at least one seed collection at least every two years. One assignment requires two or more site visits to establish seed maturation rates and to be at the site when the seeds are mature.

Qualifications:
- A commitment to plant conservation and stewardship.
- Completion of the rare plant monitoring training and at least one monitoring assignment is a prerequisite for being a seed collector.
- Ability to identify native plants in the wild and to distinguish rare plants from other co-occurring species. Additional, formal training in plant identification is a plus, but not required.
- Ability to work independently with little supervision in the outdoors in varying weather conditions.
- Ability to hike 1 to 5 miles over uneven terrain and possibly off-trails.
- Your own transportation.
- Good observation skills and an attention to detail.
- Good navigation skills are a plus, and additional training is available through Rare Care.
- A willingness to follow and abide by some basic ground rules intended to protect rare plant populations and foster good communication with our agency partners.
- Reliability, commitment and promptness in filing reports.

Expectations:
- Represent Rare Care and conduct work in a professional manner.
- Exercise good judgment in the field when deciding whether there is adequate seed production to support a collection. Guidelines will be presented at the 1-day training.
- Keep all information on the exact location of rare plant populations confidential.
- No plant material will be collected for personal use.
- Minimize your impacts to rare plant populations by removing seeds and plant materials from your clothing and shoes prior to every site visit.

Time Commitment:
- Attendance at an all-day training session.
- Complete at least one seed collection over a two year period.

Contact: Wendy Gibble, Rare Care Program Manager, at: Washington Rare Plant Care and Conservation, University of Washington, Box 354115, Seattle WA 98195; 206-616-0780; or rarecare@uw.edu.

More information about the Rare Care program can be found online at http://depts.washington.edu/rarecare/.