



Position Description: **The DSNetwork Garden Facilitator** works with staff to support and implement the Down to Earth Community garden program.

Pay Rate: \$25/hour

Hours: Average of 3 to 6 hours weekly (varies due to seasonal duties) starting late September 2022 through April 2023 (program continuation dependent on future grant funding after May 2023)

Essential Functions (to include, but not limited to)

- Plan and lead sustainable, organic, environmentally conscience garden activities for individuals with Down syndrome (children and adults - ages 8 and up)
- Prepare and maintain the community plot for garden work activities, learning opportunities and seasonal planting schedule
- Partner with local community garden space and sponsors
- Integrate the mission and physical, mental, emotional and social health and wellbeing goals of DSNetwork
- Collaborate with Tween & Teen and XCell program facilitators
- Collaborate with the Executive Director to pursue continued grants to support the growth and development of the garden program
- Promote nutrition education as it relates to the garden through taste-testing opportunities

Position Requirements:

- A commitment to the mission and vision of DSNetwork
- Knowledge of gardening, specifically knowledge of therapeutic and organic practices
- Demonstrates independence, motivation and resourcefulness and enjoys serving diverse groups of people
- Ability and willingness to serve outdoors, in inclement weather and lift up to 50 lbs
- Able to take the lead on development of individual learning goals, project goals, measurable outcomes, timelines and reporting
- Knowledge and ability to work with adolescents and adults with intellectual disabilities in small and large group settings
- A cooperative manner and the ability to serve as part of a diverse team
- Ability to work with volunteers, caregivers, parents and respite providers

Qualifications

- Garden or related horticultural/sustainability degrees and/or certification
- Must successfully pass a fingerprint criminal history background check
- Regular and reliable attendance and dependability
- Passion and previous experience working with holistic garden practices and school or community gardens
- Knowledge of topics including education, health and nutrition, the environment, and permaculture or organic gardening
- Demonstrated ability to work with diverse populations of youth and adults
- Strong oral communication skills

- Creativity to develop lessons, events, and community engagement opportunities.
- Ability to work independently, be flexible, and be self-directed

Physical Requirements: This position requires a heavy workload - ability to stand up to 4 hours a day, walk, talk, hear, operate garden and office equipment, reach with hands and arms, and must lift and/or move up to 50 pounds.

DSNetwork promotes nondiscrimination and an environment free of harassment based on an individual's race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, marital status or age.

How to Apply: Qualified and interested candidates should submit via email to jennifer@dsnetworkaz.org a cover letter and resume to be considered for an interview.

Benefits of Gardening

With the fall planting season almost here, it's a good time to think about the health benefits of being in nature. For children and adults with Down syndrome, there are many particular benefits to gardening and working with plants. According to the American Horticultural Therapy Association, horticultural therapy is widely used in a community setting with positive results for a broad range of mental health, physical, social, emotional and sensory benefits.

- Learning about plants and gardening teaches people about the earth and life cycles, how to grow food, how to appreciate healthy foods and change nutrition habits, environmental awareness, hands-on life skills experience, business skills (farmers' markets) and much more...
- Outdoor learning and working in the garden helps to improve memory, cognitive abilities, task initiation, language skills, and socialization.
- Gardening works muscles through bending, pulling, stretching, and some light lifting help strengthen muscles and improve coordination, gross and fine motor skills, balance, and endurance.
- Gardening with a small group offers a safe place to engage with others and make friends. A community that focuses on plant growth together creates natural opportunities to connect and form relationships.
- Over some time, while working in a garden, people develop patience and the ability to delay gratification.
- Gardening provides a sense of purpose, confidence, and achievement of watching their seeds grow into plants.
- Connecting with nature can reduce tension and improve moods by taking their focus away from stressors. Focusing on the fresh air, the feeling of sunlight, and the scenery of plants can have a relaxing, therapeutic effect, allowing a break from negative stimuli and screen time.
- Some people may have sensory reactions to some elements of the outdoors, but gardening can help them to explore their senses in a positive way: seeing a variety of plants, touching soil, or smelling flowers. People with sensory sensitivities may benefit from a therapeutic sensory garden to facilitate interaction with the soothing elements of nature. With repeated exposure and guidance, their negative responses may decrease and give way to positive outdoor experiences.

With so many benefits, gardening truly has the power to transform, regardless of age or ability.