

Volunteer Team Descriptions

We have provided a brief description of what it looks like to serve on one of our teams in the orchard or garden. The typical volunteer will give about 15 hours serving on a team. You do not need to have any experience to make an impact in these ministries as your team leaders and local experts will teach you what to do. Please review these as it will give you an opportunity to make an informed decision on how you can make a difference. We ask you to search your heart and decide if you are willing to make a commitment to join one of these ministries. We do not expect every volunteer to attend every session. We know that work, vacations and life in general will pull you out of sometimes. What we do ask is that you make it a priority to attend most of your team events.

Peach Team - The season begins in February with pruning. Last year we spent 3 sessions pruning and it took about 4 hours each session. This team meets every 3 weeks for one hour on Saturday mornings from April 1 until the harvest begins in late June. In June and July, they harvest on Tuesday evenings and Saturday mornings. A typical harvest session takes about one hour. During the harvest season, volunteers are asked to sign up to pick either on Tuesday evenings or Saturday mornings. We do NOT expect you to pick twice every week. The season usually ends in early August.

Apple Team - The season begins in February with pruning. Last year we spent 1 session pruning and it took about 2-3 hours. The most important project this team accomplishes is thinning the small apples off the tree right after they set fruit in the spring. Each volunteer will use scissors and cut off 90% of the apples on a tree. This thinning session will take about 2-3 hours if we have a good turnout. After thinning, this team meets every 3 weeks for one hour on Saturday mornings from April 1 until the harvest begins in September. September thru November, they harvest on Saturday mornings. A typical harvest session takes about one hour.

Grounds Crew Team – Each volunteer is on a 7-9 week rotation for mowing the grass in the orchard. It typically takes 2-3 hours to mow the grass. This team also pitches in time to bush hog the church property with our tractor. Volunteers may also use our weed eater and spray tank to eliminate weeds.

Grape Team – This team begins the year by pruning the grape vines in January. This can take 3-5 hours depending on how many people participate. You will spend most of your time serving by harvesting grapes. The season begins in August and concludes in late October. This team picks grapes twice per week and the team prefers you to commit to a weekday session or a Saturday morning session.

Blackberry Team - This team spends about one hour per week training the canes on the trellis. Most of your time serving on this team will take place from mid-July thru mid-October. This team does not harvest blackberries as it is part of the U-Pick berries we open to the public.

Blueberry Team- This team meets about every 3 weeks to fertilize or weed the berry patch for less than an hour. They also spend a few hours a couple times each summer pruning the blueberry plants.

Hummingbird Team- Our goal is to have 6-8 people that will take care of about 18 hummingbird feeders in the orchard. Hummingbirds are going to play an important role in the orchard as they eat some very damaging insects but they do not eat fruit. It is our hope that in the next year or so, we will have several hundred if not thousands of hummingbirds living on the property. The plan for this team is to have the volunteers take turns taking down the feeders, cleaning and sanitizing them, refilling and hanging the feeders back in the orchard. We would expect that the typical volunteer will give about 1.5 hours every 6-8 weeks. We will have the feeders in the orchard from late March thru October.

Orchard Host Team - This team facilitates the U-Pick berry harvest in June and July. The U-Pick patch is open on Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday from 9-11 am. We are looking for volunteers to commit to serve on a particular day of the week. This team is important because you are the face of the orchard, the church and the Real Life Center with the guest on our campus. This team gives out buckets and instructs the guest where to pick and coordinates packaging the fruit in berry containers.

Fig / Pomegranate Team- We hope to have a nice crop of figs this year. This team will pick figs once per week and package them in berry containers. Harvest begins in late summer and extends for 4-6 weeks.

Real Life Garden Team- This team will oversee the ¼ acre vegetable garden at Dogwood Church for The Real Life Center. We plan to grow: tomatoes, corn, squash, cucumbers, greens, cantaloupe and possibly other vegetables. At this point, we do not have any specifics. Our goal would be that the average volunteer would spend about 15 hours per year in this ministry just like the orchard. In general, the harvest will begin in July and run thru August. In August, a fall garden can be planted. We are also looking for someone to lead this team that has good organizational skills and are energized by serving others. You do not need to have gardening experience as we are going to connect this team with local experts that will guide you thru the season.

Mobile Garden Installation: aka – The Tractor Team- We have purchased all the equipment to use our tractor to install vegetable gardens for churches and individuals that are interested in giving part or all of their harvest to local food banks. This team will NOT take care of vegetable gardens. They will use our tractor and equipment to work the soil in preparation for planting. Our goal is to install 2-4 gardens this spring.

Please contact Amanda Hanna for additional information and questions about volunteering in the Real Life Orchard or Real Life Garden.

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