

# HOW TO RUN A VOLUNTEER GREENING DAY



Community mobilisation is the backbone of many greening projects. Whether you are planting trees, creating urban gardens, building food gardens, or even hacking alien invasive vegetation, having local volunteer participation increases community ownership and reduces the time and effort required to reach your greening goals. As they say, many hands make light work.

However, not all volunteer days are created equal. After running hundreds of community greening days over the last 12 years, the Greenpop Foundation has compiled this guide to running engaging, inspiring and impactful volunteer days.

## STEP 1

### GET THE WORD OUT

Use your network to spread the word about your volunteer day. Having a dedicated WhatsApp volunteer group or mailing list works well to ensure that interested volunteers always get the correct information. Social media can also be used effectively to recruit volunteers. Keep an eye on the weather forecast and ensure that you notify volunteers of any last minute changes.

## STEP 2

### PREPARE THE SITE

Depending on the age and fitness of your volunteers, you may want to do some of the heavy lifting or more mundane tasks a few days before your volunteers arrive. This might include digging holes for trees, removing grass and rubble, or indicating outlines of garden or vegetable beds.

## STEP 3

### DELIVER MATERIALS IN ADVANCE

Ensure that all of your plants, materials and tools are delivered to your greening site before volunteers arrive. Label and count tools and materials that need to be collected at the end of the day and arrange and organise all materials near the site for ease of access.

## STEP 4

### ASSIGN HOSTING RESPONSIBILITY

Assign a volunteer host to be responsible for ensuring that volunteers have a good experience. Their duties will include welcoming volunteers as they arrive, asking them to sign an indemnity form, giving them a brief tour of the site (pointing out restrooms, water points, etc) and checking in with them throughout the day to make sure they are engaged and content.



## STEP 5

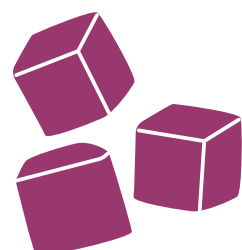
### PLAN AN INSPIRING INTRODUCTION

Once all of your volunteers have arrived, start the day with an inspiring introduction. Share your organisation's story, how the project came into being, and its broader goals. If you are working at a community space at which you are a guest (for example, a school, church, community centre, nature reserve), give the person who runs that space an opportunity to introduce the site. Give volunteers an outline of how the day will progress and what they will be expected to do. For a volunteer, there's nothing worse than giving up your time only to stand around waiting for instructions. Ensure everyone has clear expectations of what the day will entail.

## STEP 6

### BREAK THE ICE

Icebreakers are a great way to get people moving and engaged. During these activities, maintain a high level of energy and genuine enthusiasm. It is wise to have several icebreakers prepared and select those that you feel will be most appropriate for the volunteer group on the day. Limit these activities to 20 minutes.



## STEP 7

### DEMONSTRATE EACH TASK

Before moving on to the greening activities, be sure to do a thorough demonstration of the correct execution of each task and the safe use of any potentially dangerous tools.



## STEP 8

### GET ACTIVE

This is the part everyone is looking forward to! Divide the participants into smaller teams and allocate a different task or areas to each team. If appropriate, rotate tasks after a set amount of time to ensure that all volunteers have the opportunity to participate in a range of tasks. As volunteers are working, assign a few people to do quality control and assist anyone who is struggling. Try to make this part fun and high-energy, and encourage people to celebrate each completed task.

## STEP 9

### SAY THANK YOU

Once all the tasks have been completed, call the group together and thank them sincerely for their help and participation. Pose for a couple of group photos. If possible, have a picnic together in your newly greened site. This is a perfect opportunity to enjoy the company of like-minded people. Be sure to collect numbers and email addresses so that volunteers can be notified of future greening events.

## STEP 10

### TIE A RIBBON

Once the volunteers have left, do a thorough sweep of the site: check for loose ends, correct any errors, pick up any litter and collect tools. If there are extra materials on-site that haven't been used (like soil, compost, mulch) be sure to remove them. Take photographs of your progress. If the site has a grounds manager, inform them of what needs to happen in the months following the volunteer day. Schedule a visit within a couple of weeks to document progress, identify any possible problems and provide ongoing support.

**TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT GREENPOP'S PROJECTS OR TO JOIN A VOLUNTEER DAY, VISIT [WWW.GREENPOP.ORG](http://WWW.GREENPOP.ORG).**

## THE FYNBOS CORRIDOR COLLABORATION

The Fynbos Corridor Collaboration is a coordinated effort between NPOs based in Cape Town to create sustainable greening efforts that are more productive and focussed. Communitree, Greenpop and Ingungcu are the founding members of the Fynbos Corridor Collaboration.

**LEARN MORE AT [FYNBOSCORRIDORS.ORG](http://FYNBOSCORRIDORS.ORG)**



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