



*Somerset County  
Park Commission*

# Somerset County Park Commission Manager of Horticulture

Division of Leisure and Community Services

*Accepting applications through March 6, 2024*



Somerset County Park Commission was established in 1956. The park system is home to approximately 15,000 acres of open space, and well on its way to achieving its goal of creating a 20,500-acre network of park and open space facilities. County population is approximately 350,000 and the annual budget for the Park Commission is \$25 million. There are approximately 160 full-time employees, 275 seasonal/continuous part time employees, and 250 active volunteers. The park system has an aggressive program of land acquisition, a mission to provide a wide variety of recreation activities, and a responsibility to protect the County's critical environmental resources and wildlife. Facilities include a wide range of opportunities for leisure pursuits. Golf is a large component with five golf courses, three driving ranges, a pitch and putt course, and a recreational putting course. Specialized facilities include a riding stable, an environmental education center, two tennis facilities, a swimming pool, spray park, and paddle boating. Horticulture activities include a rock formation

and rare plant garden, an award-winning rose garden, arboretum, perennial garden, and a sensory and fragrance garden. Five general use parks offer picnic facilities, bike paths, athletic fields, and fishing opportunities. The park system also encompasses several natural areas offering more passive pursuits such as bird watching and hiking. Therapeutic Recreation provides year-round activities and events for children and adults with disabilities.

**Colonial Park Perennial Garden**



## Leonard J. Buck Garden

Leonard J. Buck Garden, located in Far Hills, New Jersey is one of the premier rock gardens in the eastern United States. Begun in the late 1930's, the garden has reached a breathtaking point of maturity. It consists of a series of alpine and woodland gardens situated in a 33-acre wooded stream valley. Named for Mr. Leonard J. Buck, who developed the garden as part of his estate, it was donated to the Somerset County Park Commission by Mrs. Helen Buck in 1976.

The garden was developed as a naturalistic garden which incorporates several large rock outcroppings found on the property. Each outcropping is slightly different, creating varying exposures and microclimates which enable different plant associations to thrive. Tucked among the rocks are rare and exotic rock garden plants. The wooded trails connecting the outcroppings are lined with beautiful wildflowers that have flourished and multiplied through the years. Throughout the gardens grow various ferns. At the base of the valley walls, azaleas and rhododendrons produce a colorful display in May and early June. The garden's peak bloom is

in spring, when favorite wildflowers, diminutive alpinas, and delicate azaleas all compete for attention, but there is something interesting in bloom almost every week of the year.

Buck Garden offers a variety of exhibits, workshops, lectures, guided tours and an annual plant sale. Formal photography sessions are available by permit with an advanced reservation.



Leonard J. Buck Garden

## Colonial Park Gardens

Colonial Park Gardens is a collection of botanical display gardens nestled within Colonial Park, a 685-acre recreation facility located in Franklin Township, New Jersey. Horticultural areas feature an award-winning rose garden, nationally accredited arboretum, perennial garden, sensory garden, and additional collections of ornamental grasses and shrubs.



Rudolf W. van der Goot Rose Garden

The Rudolf W. van der Goot Rose Garden is one acre in size and offers a formal display of more than 3,000 roses of 325 varieties, including modern and heirloom roses. Tucked within the Rose Garden is the Fragrance and Sensory Garden which is popular among visitors of all ages for its changing collection of plants which engage multiple senses and invite interaction.

The formal garden is adjacent to the Arboretum which contains over 900 labeled specimens of flowering trees, evergreens, shade trees, and flowering shrubs. The collection represents trees from many different taxonomic groups and specimens are displayed in a manner which promotes education, inspiration, and enjoyment.

The Perennial Garden, centered around a gazebo, is a five-acre garden which provides year-round interest including a peak bloom of over 150,000 bulbs in early spring. The gazebo is a popular site for wedding ceremonies and photography, for which permits are reserved.

## Job Description

Under the direction of the Administrator of Leisure and Community Services, plan, promote, implement, and evaluate all horticulture activities of the park commission. Responsible for leadership and oversight of two Supervisors, an Administrative Assistant, and several horticulture areas including Leonard J. Buck Garden and Colonial Park Gardens, which includes the Rudolf van der Goot Rose Garden, Perennial Garden, Arboretum and woody plant collections in addition to all other horticulture needs within the park system and golf courses. One supervisor oversees the daily activities of Buck Garden and three full time gardeners along with part-time/seasonal staff. Another supervisor performs the same function for horticulture activities connected with Colonial Park Gardens, and the parks and golf courses within the park commission. Colonial Park Supervisor oversees six full-time gardeners, Rosarian, and the Horticulture Administrative Assistant in addition to part-time/seasonal gardeners.

Leonard J. Buck Garden features native and exotic plants displayed in a rock outcropping and woodlands throughout 29 acres. Guided tours are provided by staff and trained docents, and seasonal workshops are also conducted. There are approximately 15,000 visitations annually and the garden generates income of approximately \$20,000 in gate donations, programs, guided tours, and wedding photography annually.

The display gardens at Colonial Park have over 50,000 visitors throughout the year. Staff provides guided tours of all three areas as well as providing lectures to groups with various interests on a wide range of horticultural topics. Wedding ceremonies and commercial photography, tours, programs, and gate donations bring in over \$38,000 annually. In addition to the Colonial Park Gardens, horticulture gardeners tend to the horticulture needs at all other park facilities.

This position is accountable for the management of all horticulture services throughout the park commission. The total operating budget for the department is approximately \$250,000 and salaries total \$900,000. This position is also responsible for requesting funding projects through the Buck Trust through the Somerset County Park Foundation.

## Qualifications

Bachelor's degree in Horticulture or a closely related field and five years of management experience or equivalent combination of education and experience. A strong knowledge of environmental and ecological concepts is required. Must demonstrate understanding of the role of plants, gardens, and collections in public horticulture. Must demonstrate knowledge of herbaceous and woody landscape plants appropriate for central and northern New Jersey. Must possess excellent leadership and communications skills with the ability to speak to large groups. Must be able to work weekends and holidays when required. Must have a valid driver's license. Must have or be willing to obtain a N.J. Certified Pesticide Applicator license.



Colonial Park Arboretum



Colonial Park Perennial Garden

# Duties

1. Oversee the aesthetics, planning, maintenance, and development of Leonard J. Buck Garden and Colonial Park Gardens which includes the Rudolf van der Goot Rose Garden, Perennial Garden and Arboretum and in manicured horticultural areas throughout the park commission.
2. Oversee planning and execution of all garden and horticultural programs, workshops, and events; including but not limited to the annual Plant Sale at Buck Garden and Rose Day Festival at Colonial Park Gardens.
3. Oversee implementation of Integrative Pest Management program for all horticultural assets within all parks and gardens.
4. Establish, implement, and evaluate annual goals and objectives for the horticulture department.
5. Directly supervise four full time staff: Buck Garden Supervisor, Horticulture Supervisor, and Buck Garden Administrative Assistant.
6. Assume overall responsibility for the department's annual operating budget and capital planning budget. Develop, justify, and defend proposed budget submission.
7. Prepare recommendations to annual fee schedule; prepare program and special event cost analyses.
8. Direct and provide leadership to staff to ensure the quality of landscape maintenance and plant care are maintained at the highest level, which includes overseeing modification of soil conditions, irrigation and other growing environmental factors to support sustainable plant health and the highest level of plant diversity.
9. Direct and provide leadership to gardeners to ensure the ongoing excellence of maintaining plant records for the garden and grounds including plant accessions, labels, and cultivation information recording and providing feedback on living collections database (iRIS BG BASE) at Buck Garden.
10. Provide leadership in promoting a culture of teamwork and mutual support with the goal of promoting employee job satisfaction while accomplishing the garden's goals and mission. Promote inclusivity.
11. Inform and participate in meadow management projects in parks. Work, design, and implement conservation horticulture and reforestation projects in the Sourland Mountain Preserve and other areas of forested park property.
12. Maintain inventory of plants, trees, and fixed assets at Buck Garden.
13. Maintain a professional and cooperative relationship with the Buck Family and Somerset County Park Foundation.
14. Represent the Park Commission on community boards; provide lectures, tours and workshops and teaches garden and horticulturally based classes.
15. Facilitate the preparation of public bid and bid documents for annual tree planting, horticultural chemicals, supplies, plants materials, contracts, and services including tree work.
16. Maintain a professional relationship with all guests, donors, professional committees, peer organizations, construction contractors, vendors, consultants, and all levels of staff and volunteers.
17. Set standards, review, and edit printed material produced for public use or marketing. Review and approve of press releases, brochures, and other promotional materials related to the horticulture department.
18. Serve on internal and external committees, working groups and/or ad hoc task forces, as requested, providing horticulture expertise and contributing to the attainment of successful results.



Leonard J. Buck Garden - Guided Tour

## Duties (cont.)

19. Secure external funding through donations, trust accounts, or grants. Research, submit applications, and administer grants for enhancement and/or development of programs, events, and facility improvements.
20. Administrative duties include conducting regular staff meetings, annual staff performance appraisals, budget tracking, monthly reports, attending conferences and outside agency meetings to stay current with the horticulture profession.
21. Resolve intra-department issues and coordinate with other Park Commission deputy directors and managers on broader horticultural, programmatic, marketing, sustainability, and financial issues.
22. Follow and enforce Park Commission policies and procedures.
23. Perform other duties as assigned by the Park Commission.



Rudolf W. van der Goot Rose Garden - Fountain

## Compensation and Benefits

The Somerset County Park Commission has a knowledgeable, motivated, and dedicated staff. Our goal is to create a working environment which motivates employees to provide unique, personalized, and unparalleled service. The minimum salary for this position is **\$73,800**. The Park Commission offers an attractive benefits package with the following components.

- **Pension Plan** – NJ Public Employees Retirement System (PERS); Voluntary 457 Deferred Compensation Plan
- **Life Insurance** – Through PERS, non-contributory at 1.5 x salary; contributory at an additional 1.5 x salary
- **Health Insurance** – The Commission participates in Aetna of NJ POS Direct Access and Delta Dental Premier Plan of NJ. A portion of employee/dependent coverage is paid for by Park Commission
- **Holidays** – 14 paid holidays per year
- **Vacation** – 10 days per year minimum increasing depending on years of service
- **Personal Leave** – 3 days per year
- **Sick Leave** – 12 sick days per year
- **Flexible Spending Account** – maximum amount \$3,050 annually
- **Employee Assistance Program** – Free counseling services for employees and their dependents including family, parenting and dependent care, education, daily living and stress management, and work and career growth
- **Jury Duty Compensation**
- **Tuition Reimbursement** for approved courses

# Application & Interview Procedures

Applications will be reviewed and the candidates with the most relevant qualifications will be considered for interviews. Cover letter, resume, and answers to the three supplemental essay questions must be submitted by **March 6, 2024** to:

**Donna Umgelter, Administrator of Human Resources**  
**Somerset County Park Commission**  
PO Box 5327  
North Branch NJ 08876  
[dmumgelter@scparcs.org](mailto:dmumgelter@scparcs.org)  
908 722-1200 ext. 5239  
[www.somersetcountyparks.org](http://www.somersetcountyparks.org)

*It is encouraged for applicants to request confirmation receipt of application. Reasonable accommodation may be made, where necessary, to allow a qualified individual to perform essential job functions.*

## Supplemental Essay Questions

*(Not to exceed three pages)*

1. Please describe your approach to leadership, building relationships, effective communication, and accomplishing the mission of the Somerset County Park Commission.
2. Discuss your philosophy and techniques relating to providing an exceptional horticultural experience for visitors to a public garden.
3. Please describe three specific accomplishments in your horticultural career you consider to be the most significant. Describe the challenges and highlights you faced on the path to these accomplishments.

**Leonard J. Buck Garden - Rock Gardens**



**Somerset County  
Park Commission**