

Title: Paleobotany Collections Assistant (Two Volunteer Positions Available)

Location: Burke Museum

Overview: Paleobotany Collections Assistant volunteers support the curation, organization, digitization, and imaging of the paleobotany (plant fossil) collection. This position works closely with the Paleobotany Collections and Lab Manager and other collections staff/volunteers to make our collection more organized, accurate, and useful for researchers around the world.

Description: The Burke Museum cares for and shares natural and cultural collections so all people can learn, be inspired, generate knowledge, feel joy, and heal. Founded in 1885 and declared the Washington State Museum in 1899, the Burke is the oldest museum in Washington. The Museum's founders began collecting natural and cultural objects as they watched frontier-era Seattle transform before their eyes. For 130 years, the museum built upon this legacy, amassing millions of objects that show us how the Northwest has grown and changed.

The paleobotany collection houses more than 80,000 fossil plant specimens and modern reference materials. While our strength is in the Cenozoic (past 66 million years) history western North America, we house collections from around the globe and dating back billions of years. These fossils include leaves, seeds, flowers, wood, as well as microscopic remains of plants (e.g., pollen). This collection has grown over nearly 100 years and is used by researchers around the globe to understand the history of vegetation on Earth, the evolution of plants, past climate, and the interactions between plants and animals through geologic history.

Basic Duties:

- Operate DSLR camera equipment, lighting, and computer software to capture 2D images of plant fossil specimens
- Work performed in our Paleontology Collections Workroom at the Burke Museum (note: this space is visible through windows from the public exhibits).
- Coordinate with other volunteers on use of shared equipment and project progress
- Evaluate image quality and communicate with Collections Manager about technical issues or questions
- Manage project progress through spreadsheets, file management, and updates to the Paleobotany Collections and Lab Manager
- Opportunity to potentially assist Collections Manager with other projects (e.g., fossil specimen housing and organization, cataloging of new collections, data management, etc.) Would be discussed after six to twelve months, depending on skills, interests, and abilities
- Other duties as assigned

Requirements:

- Must be 18 years old or older.
- Must submit a criminal background check.
- Ability to pick up 20lb. trays and push carts through storage space.
- Experience with computers, including file movement and renaming.
- Attention to detail and ability to care for delicate fossil specimens.
- Comfortable with working in a publicly visible workroom space.

Desired:

- (Optional) experience with camera equipment (Canon Mark IV, Canon Digital Photo Professional software)

Time Commitment:

- A minimum of a two-hour commitment is required per shift. Shifts can be scheduled at will, anytime 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., any day of the week (excluding UW holidays). Preference for availability Monday–Thursday for overlap with Paleobotany Collections Manager
- A minimum of four shifts are required per month, with some flexibility.
- Supplemental training, social networking with other paleobotany volunteers, students, and professionals, and experience with other paleontology collections available periodically.