



Working for the Great Outdoors

Botanist

Do you enjoy working outdoors? Are you drawn to the study of plants and plant diversity? If so, a job as a botanist with the Forest Service may be of interest to you!

The Work Environment

As a Forest Service botanist, you will have the important responsibility of caring for plants and plant communities on portions of the 193 million acres of national forests and grasslands. Other resource specialists will depend on you to advise them about plants and their habitats. You may be assigned to some of the most scenic places in the Nation—places managed not only for their natural resources, but for their natural beauty as well. Botanists work in a variety of conditions, climates, and terrain.

Operating on the Job

Your duties as a Forest Service botanist will include working on teams with other resource specialists to conserve and manage plant resources on national forests and grasslands. You will evaluate the biological implications of various constructions, logging, or other projects and develop conservation strategies to maintain threatened, endangered, and sensitive plants. You will manage and conserve plant biodiversity through a variety of programs such as Air Quality, Fuels Management, Lands, Mineral, Range, Recreation, Timber, and Watershed.

Forest Service botanists work closely with other agencies, public interest groups, and members of the community to conserve plant resources. Plant conservation ranges from controlling non-native species and noxious weeds to protecting threatened and endangered species. Forest Service botanists also contribute their skills to a variety of activities including lichen monitoring for air quality, identifying native plant species for watershed restoration projects, and developing nature trails. As a Forest Service botanist, you will continually learn about plants and plant communities found on National Forest System lands. This knowledge is vital to managing plants for the overall health of forest and grassland ecosystems. At times you will work alone outdoors. At other times, you will be teaching others about plants. But, at all times, you will be a part of a team—an interdisciplinary approach to managing national forest and grasslands.

Career Paths and Requirements

Being a botanist in the Forest Service is challenging, varied, and satisfying. The Forest Service works hard to provide botanists with the up-to-date training and experience they need to give the support that is vital to our operation.

Botanists are hired at many different grade levels. Recent college graduates may be hired at the GS-5 or GS-7 grade level. They spend up to 2 years in training and developmental positions, and then may be noncompetitive promoted to the GS-9 grade level. You may also be hired initially for grade level positions if you meet higher education and/or experience requirements. Promotion opportunities at GS-11 and above are competitive, but opportunities are good.

To be a botanist with the Forest Service, you must have a bachelor's degree with a major in biological science and complete the following course work:

- At least 24 semester-hours in botany. Courses can include, but are not limited to, plant anatomy or morphology, genetics, taxonomy or systematic botany, plant ecology, and mycology.

In addition to meeting the minimum bachelor's degree requirements described above, you need the following kinds of education and/or experience for appointment above GS-5:

The GS-7 level requires a full year of graduate-level education or superior academic achievement or 1 year of experience equivalent to the GS-5 level.

The GS-9 level requires 2 full years of progressively higher level education or a master's or equivalent degree or 1 year of experience equivalent to the GS-7 level.

The GS-11 level requires 3 full years of progressively higher level graduate education or a Ph.D. or equivalent graduate degree or 1 year of experience equivalent to the GS-9 level.

In lieu of the above requirements, a combination of education and experience may qualify you for the position.

These qualification requirements have been summarized for convenience. Full details are available at www.USAJobs.gov or the www.opm.gov subject index under "Qualifications."



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