POSITION PROFILE

Executive Director
Tyler Arboretum
Media, PA
About Tyler Arboretum

History

Tyler Arboretum, a natural sanctuary in Greater Philadelphia which encompasses 650 acres of woodlands, streams, and hiking trails, seeks to conserve our historic landscapes and connect people with the natural world. Just a 30-minute drive west from Philadelphia in Delaware County, Tyler Arboretum offers seasonally changing gardens, stands of towering trees (several of which are state champions), 17 miles of hiking trails, and historic buildings dating back to the 18th and 19th centuries.

In 1681, Thomas Minshall, an English Quaker, bought property in Pennsylvania from William Penn; part of that land deed included the land that Tyler Arboretum sits on today.

In the mid-1800s, Thomas Minshall’s sixth-generation descendants, the brothers Minshall and Jacob Painter, began the systematic planting of more than 1,000 plants for study and enjoyment. Their collection became locally known as the Painter Arboretum. In 1863, Minshall and Jacob built the Painter Library for their growing natural science collections and equipment. Ultimately left in trust in 1930 by the widow of the last Minshall descendant, the John J. Tyler Arboretum became a nonprofit public garden in 1944.

In the 19th Century, the Painter Brothers built this cistern to pump water down to the main family home and their library. Visible in the winter months, but seen here in spring with our dedicated volunteers and gardeners, and in late summer, it turns into a glorious pollinator garden, filled with birds and butterflies.

Photo credit: Mallory Smith
In 1946, the renowned horticulturist Dr. John C. Wister became Tyler Arboretum’s first director. Dr. Wister planted the collections of magnolias, cherries, crabapples, lilacs, conifers, and rhododendrons we see today. He also laid out an early network of hiking trails. Between 1997 and 2013 the Stopford Family Meadow Maze, deer fence, an expanded system of hiking trails, paved Scenic Loop, pathways, tree houses, and Butterfly House were installed. In 2019 Tyler celebrated its 75th anniversary as a public garden and arboretum.

Today Tyler Arboretum is a nonprofit organization with the mission to preserve, develop, and share diverse horticultural, historic, and natural site resources to stimulate stewardship and an understanding of our living world. Tyler fulfills its mission through high quality educational programs, extensive horticultural collections and displays, preservation of its historic buildings, and stewardship of 650 acres of woodlands, meadows, and stream valleys. Tyler Arboretum is a delight for nature lovers, birders, botanists, and those who want to rediscover the natural world.

The Giant Sequoia, one of the sculptures from our Gateways to Nature exhibition, and our Basking Circle.
Photo Credit: Julia Lo Ehrhardt
Plants, Collections, and Horticultural Highlights

• While the land was already home to a significant array of native plants, many of Tyler’s horticultural displays date from the mid-1800s, when Minshall and Jacob Painter started an arboretum on their family farm. Today, 17 of the Painter plants are alive and well, two of which are state champions, meaning they are the largest individual specimens of specific species recorded in the state of Pennsylvania. Five native trees from the 19th century or earlier also survive.

• Today these magnificent historic trees and shrubs tower over the landscape, creating a sense of awe and inspiration.

• From 1948 to 1968, the first director of Tyler Arboretum, Dr. John Caspar Wister, planned and laid out the collections of cherries, lilacs, magnolias, rhododendrons, and crabapples, as well as the Pinetum and the beginnings of a trail system. Today, over 17 miles of hiking trails that traverse 550 acres of uncultivated natural areas.

• Since the 1950s Tyler has partnered with the Herb Society of America’s Philadelphia Unit in developing and maintaining a four-tiered Fragrant Garden (originally planned as The Garden for the Blind).

• Lucille’s Edible Garden and Schoolhouse, completed in March 2019, provides hands-on learning for all ages about healthy eating, healthy living, and sustaining healthy land. Situated in Tyler’s historic core, the garden provides an experiential gateway to the arboretum’s other attractions with easy access to the meadows, woodlands, pond, and streams. Most of the food produced is donated to the local Media Food Bank which is helping provide food to the underserved in our community.

As an Audubon-recognized Important Bird Area, Tyler values the diversity of our avian ecosystems. From vocal catbirds to our bluebird conservation program, birds and birding are important aspects of our work here at Tyler.

Photo Credit: Dave Eberly
Programs, Events, and Exhibits

Tyler provides a full calendar of educational and public programs including regularly scheduled volunteer-led hikes, yoga classes, tastings in the edible garden, bird walks, family story time, and more. Tyler also offers private, one-hour, seasonal tours by reservation.

Annual events include the Tyler at Twilight fundraising event every in early summer as well as the spring plant sale in May.

The Arboretum is home to seasonally open treehouses, a 1,400 square-foot Butterfly House, and several historic buildings including Lachford Hall, a Pennsylvania stone bank barn, the Painter Library, and several 19th-century outbuildings including a root cellar, springhouse, and greenhouse. Tyler is also recognized by the National Audubon Society as an Important Bird Area, and maintains an active bluebird nest box program with over 47 monitored and maintained boxes.

Photo credit: Karen Hoover

Tyler’s first Executive Director wrote in 1946 that the bank below Lachford Hall had been home to snowdrops and winter aconite for more than 100 years.

LEARN MORE:
tylerarboretum.org
The Opportunity

Tyler Arboretum seeks an inspiring, visionary nonprofit leader who will develop the team and work with all Tyler’s many constituents and partners to establish and promote the Arboretum as a site of respite, recreation, education, community, and advocacy for our natural environment. The next Executive Director will implement the board-approved Strategic Plan, focused on strengthening the organization’s foundation in a transformative moment as it approaches its centennial. Qualified candidates will be motivated by the vision, mission, and values elaborated in the Strategic Plan.

**Vision:**

We envision Tyler Arboretum as a leader in conservation, inspiring visitors of all ages and backgrounds to value nature and protect natural habitats in their own communities.

**Mission:**

The mission of Tyler Arboretum is to conserve our historic landscapes and connect people with the natural world.

**Values:**

Environmental Sustainability to ensure healthy ecosystems for future generations.

Collaboration among our staff, Board, volunteers, and community members.

Curiosity in the ever-changing world around us.

Integrity in all that we do, every day.

Inclusivity of people of all backgrounds.

Openness to new ideas and possibilities.

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*Every year in early May, Tyler holds a Plant Sale. A much beloved community event, the Plant Sale allows Tyler a wonderful fundraising event, which simultaneously allows us to share our wonderful horticultural knowledge with all who come to shop.*
The new Executive Director will be an engaging and dynamic ambassador for Tyler, cultivating existing and new relationships with partners, supporters, and funders to ensure the organization’s financial health, while establishing Tyler as a key resource for the communities of Delaware County and the region. The Executive Director will lead from a mindset of abundance, developing opportunities for collaboration that leverage the organization’s position as “everybody’s backyard.” This individual will marshal the combined energy and resources of a deeply engaged Board of Trustees, an active and committed corps of volunteers, and a highly dedicated professional staff, to work together efficiently and effectively toward accomplishing the strategic goals of Tyler Arboretum.

Five Strategic Goals

Preserve

1. Preservation of Land, Collections, & Buildings: We will care for our land, collections, and buildings with thoughtful intention to share Tyler’s story and amazing 650 acres, for generations to come.

Engage

2. Visitor Experience and Engagement: We will provide unique and memorable visitor experiences engaging a diverse audience in discovering nature and strengthening Tyler’s visitor base.

Sustain

3. Internal Operations and Culture: We will strengthen internal operations and foster a culture of inclusivity that aligns with Tyler’s mission and core values.

4. Fundraising and Financial Sustainability: We will achieve sustainability to ensure that Tyler can care for and share our 650 acres with a standard of excellence.

5. Branding, Marketing, and Communications: We will create a collaborative marketing plan to achieve growth and increase visitation, membership, volunteers, and donors.
Overview of Responsibilities

Reporting to the Board of Trustees, the Executive Director is responsible for providing strategic direction and leadership to the operation of Tyler Arboretum. The Executive Director manages the development and oversight of all fiscal and programmatic matters, in addition to the oversight of 16 full-time staff and 10-15 part-time staff, including four director-level reports and a Chief of Staff.

The Executive Director serves as the lead representative and public-facing spokesperson for Tyler’s efforts and, working closely with the Board of Trustees, establishes and implements Tyler’s strategic plan (recently completed and approved) to advance the mission, protect and preserve the land, and grow all aspects of the organization’s resources. The Executive Director must cultivate cooperative working partnerships with the Board, staff, volunteers, community members, corporations, educational institutions, government and private agencies, and conservation partners.

The Executive Director orchestrates the skills and talents of the staff and volunteers to engage wide-ranging constituents in efforts that support the mission and achieve the strategic goals of the organization. The Executive Director works closely with the Board and staff to identify and secure new financial and other resources to support the mission of Tyler Arboretum.

Tyler calls the area where the Painter Brothers planted their collection of interesting trees “Old Arb” – and here you see the beauty of Old Arb: big expanses of lawn surrounded by the remaining collection of Painter-era trees – the perfect place for a picnic.

Photo credit: Mai McNeill
Candidate Profile

While it is understood that no one candidate will bring every desired skill, characteristic, and experience, the following offers a reflection of the ideal candidate profile.

VISIONARY, STRATEGIC LEADER

The Executive Director is a visionary, innovative, and strategic leader able to develop, articulate, and implement a vision in alignment with the mission of Tyler Arboretum. This executive brings proven success building a culture of collaboration, where the team is motivated and supported to achieve big-picture strategic goals. The Executive Director will be a data-driven decision maker who understands the importance of effective data gathering and analysis to determine the needs and opportunities available. This leader actively seeks out partnerships and builds coalitions to advance the mission of the institution and its priorities. The Executive Director must recognize the uniqueness of the Arboretum’s position as a crucial resource for the community in environmental conservation and natural stewardship. Further, the Executive Director will embrace the opportunity to nurture Tyler’s significant plant collection, so that the Arboretum survives and thrives as a place of natural beauty and inspiration for future generations.

Photo credit: Julia Lo Ehrhardt

*Tyler has a long history of engaging our youngest visitors in interesting and meaningful ways through activities, events, programming, and through encouraging our members to come and enjoy the property with their children.*

Diversified Search Group

Executive Director, Tyler Arboretum
COMPELLING AMBASSADOR AND FUNDRAISER

The Executive Director believes in and advocates for the power of our natural environment to improve the lives of individuals and communities. As the Arboretum’s chief ambassador, the Executive Director is an influential leader, capable of understanding and communicating the value of the Arboretum across a wide range of audiences, such as community leaders, cultural groups, philanthropists, corporate collaborators, legislators, and academics. This leader possesses exceptional interpersonal skills with the ability to build and sustain dedicated support across a wide range of constituents, including the Arboretum’s staff and volunteers, Board of Trustees, and donors and members, as well as with community members and the broader public. The Executive Director brings to the role a natural inclination to the role for interpersonal engagement to attract new audiences, identify new funding opportunities, and sustain programs and operations. The ideal candidate will inspire trust and confidence and excel at developing strategies to amplify the Arboretum’s brand and visibility in the Southeastern Pennsylvania region and beyond. They will bring experience to promote the importance of inclusion and diversity in all areas of the Arboretum’s work and convey its importance with authenticity, sincerity, and passion.

INSTITUTIONAL LEADER WITH BUSINESS ACUMEN

The Executive Director has operational and fiscal management experience and the ability to set clear priorities, delegate, and guide investment in people and systems. The ideal candidate has a proven record of successful planning and oversight of similarly structured and sized organizations and will ensure fiduciary responsibility, transparent fiscal management practices, and accountability. The Executive Director will inspire staff, the Board of Trustees, donors, partners, and volunteers to work together to achieve new heights for the Arboretum. The ideal candidate must have a willingness to learn and gain a deeper understanding of the needs of the Arboretum, and the courage to have difficult conversations when the need arises. The candidate also brings demonstrated success building a culture of collaboration and support, motivating and inspiring others to achieve impact through creativity, fostering teamwork, and leveraging individual strengths to meet organizational goals. The Executive Director possesses the ability to leverage the talents of an experienced staff and provide a productive work environment with professional growth opportunities that result in team cohesion and camaraderie.

Originally built in 1950 as a garden for the blind, the Fragrant Garden is a beautiful series of terraced gardens filled with a beautiful array of plants that are a delight to all the senses. Photo credit: Julia Lo Ehrhardt
PASSIONATE SUPPORTER OF THE ARBORETUM’S MISSION

Fully embracing Tyler’s mission to conserve its historic landscapes and connect people with the natural world, the Executive Director will be knowledgeable about or affinitive toward horticulture and conservation. The ideal candidate will bring a sincere passion for arboreta and public gardens and a commitment to expanding the influence of the Arboretum within its Delaware Valley community, the Greater Philadelphia region, and beyond. The Executive Director seeks process improvement with the goal of helping the Arboretum deepen its impact. This individual leads with sincerity and empathy, honesty and credibility, and the highest levels of personal and professional integrity and ethics.

IN ADDITION, STRONG CANDIDATES WILL HAVE THE FOLLOWING QUALIFICATIONS:

- A bachelor’s degree is required, as is at least five years of professional experience in nonprofit leadership with significant fiscal responsibility. Candidates should bring a working knowledge of critical environmental matters relevant to Tyler’s mission.
- Candidates must have exceptional written and verbal communication and presentation skills across diverse audiences and settings.
- Candidates will bring emotional intelligence and approachability; they will develop trust through transparency and accountability with staff, volunteers, and Trustees.

Originally planted in the 1940s by Tyler’s first Executive Director and famous rhododendron hybridizer, Dr. Caspar Wister, the Rhododendron Garden is a 14-acre garden home to some very unusual species of Rhododendron, and as seen in this photo, some beautiful stands of hostas.

Photo credit: Dr. John C. Wister
Compensation & Benefits

The salary range for this position is $140,000–$150,000. Tyler provides a flexible work schedule and generous employee benefits including medical benefits and personal time off.

Salary is competitive and commensurate with experience.

Contact

Koya Partners, the executive search firm that specializes in mission-driven search, has been exclusively retained for this engagement. Tenley Bank and Naree W.S. Viner of Koya Partners have been exclusively retained for this search. To express interest in this role please submit your materials here or email Tenley directly at tbank@koyapartners.com. All inquiries and discussions will be considered strictly confidential.

Koya Partners is committed to providing reasonable accommodation to individuals living with disabilities. If you are a qualified individual living with a disability and need assistance expressing interest online, please email NonprofitSearchOps@divsearch.com. If you are selected for an interview, you will receive additional information regarding how to request an accommodation for the interview process.

Tyler Arboretum is an equal opportunity employer and strongly encourages applications from people of color, persons with disabilities, women, and LGBTQ+ applicants.

About Koya Partners

Koya Partners, a part of Diversified Search Group, is a leading executive search and strategic advising firm dedicated to connecting exceptionally talented people with mission-driven clients. Our founding philosophy—The Right Person in the Right Place Can Change the World—guides our work as we partner with nonprofits & NGOs, institutions of higher education, responsible businesses, and social enterprises in local communities and around the world.

For more information about Koya Partners, visit www.koyapartners.com.