The Garden Club of America Fellowship in Ecological Restoration Guidelines for Application (revised November 15, 2013)

The Garden Club of America (GCA) offers an annual Fellowship in Ecological Restoration. Established in 2000 with funds from the John B. Young Charitable Trust as well as GCA members and clubs, the fellowship’s goal is to support research that will advance knowledge and increase the number of scientists in the important field of ecological restoration, the active healing of the land. The $8,000 grant is awarded annually to exceptional graduate students to support specialized study in ecological restoration at an accredited U.S. university. Preference will be given to projects that include field research conducted in the United States. A panel of experts associated with the University of Wisconsin–Madison Arboretum reviews the applications and makes recommendations to the GCA Scholarship Committee.

For the purposes of this scholarship, The Garden Club of America agrees to the definition of ecological restoration as stated by the Society of Ecological Restoration (SER).

Selection criteria will include the degree to which the proposed fellowship work addresses the objectives of the GCA,* as well as the excellence of the student’s academic qualifications and person.

*The purpose of The Garden Club of America is to stimulate the knowledge and love of gardening, to share the advantages of association by means of educational meetings, conferences, correspondence and publications, and to restore, improve, and protect the quality of the environment through educational programs and action in the fields of conservation and civic improvement.

Applicant Instructions

Applications are considered only if these instructions are followed:

A. The applicant shall prepare the following:
1. A one-page, left-justified cover sheet that includes: applicant’s name; academic advisor’s name and title; name of university and department; title of research; applicant’s mailing address, e-mail address, cell phone number and permanent mailing address, email and phone (if different).
2. A written proposal for the research to be undertaken: no longer than five single-spaced pages, including literature cited, tables, figures, etc. Margins shall be at least one inch. Font shall be 12 point; smaller—but readable!—font is allowed in figures. References should be listed alphabetically with a hanging half-inch indent.
3. A one-page budget for the proposed research, describing how the award would be spent. If the budget is over $8,000, state specifically which item(s) are included in the request for funding from the GCA.
5. The four documents should be sent via e-mail as a single PDF attachment. They must be
emailed no later than December 31. Send to Brad Herrick, Ecologist, bmherrick@wisc.edu. The subject line must read “GCA fellowship application.”

B. The applicant shall also see that the following two letters are written and sent:
1. A letter of endorsement written by the applicant’s graduate faculty advisor. The letter must include a statement that the applicant is properly enrolled in graduate school.
2. One additional letter of recommendation.
3. These letters must be submitted by their authors via e-mail. They may be sent either in the body of the e-mail or as PDF attachments. The letters must be emailed no later than December 31. Letters should be sent to Brad Herrick, Ecologist, bmherrick@wisc.edu. The subject line should read “GCA letter for [applicant’s name].”

Notification

Award selection will be completed early in March. The recipients will be notified and the award made by the GCA Scholarship Committee shortly thereafter. Applicants not receiving awards will be notified via e-mail before the end of March. Please do not send inquiries regarding the status of the award before April 1.

Fellowship Recipient Responsibilities

The GCA requests the following of fellowship recipients:
1. An abstract describing the study in layman’s language (250 words), due September 1, for possible publication in the GCA Bulletin and/or on the UW–Madison Arboretum website.
3. A final project report due February 1.
4. Notification of any published papers or reports based on work supported by this fellowship (see also #8).
5. Clear, crisp high resolution photographs of the recipient at work and other interesting photos of the research that are suitable for use in publications or scholarship promotion should be included with the abstract and report as JPEG attachments. At least one should be of the recipient alone.
6. Send all of the above to Brad Herrick, Ecologist, bmherrick@wisc.edu. He will forward materials to the Garden Club of America Scholarship Committee.
7. As is practical, recipients may be invited to make a brief oral presentation of their project activities at a GCA zone or annual meeting.
8. The Garden Club of America and the University of Wisconsin–Madison Arboretum shall receive acknowledgement for their assistance in any publication or report resulting from this fellowship.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. May the restoration research be conducted outside of the USA?
Yes, but preference is given for projects within the United States.
2. I am not a US citizen. May I apply?  
Yes, if you meet the other requirements stated in the Guidelines.

3. Are there any restrictions on how the money is spent?  
The fellowship is awarded to people who exemplify high standards, and the GCA expects that the money will be spent appropriately. Examples of appropriate expenditures include supplies and equipment directly related to your research, travel expenses, hiring assistants, and tuition costs. Although tuition costs are acceptable, it is recommended not to include these costs as more than 75% of your budget. If you have doubt about the appropriateness of your budget, please contact Brad Herrick, Ecologist, bmherrick@wisc.edu.

4. Can the award be given directly to my university?  
No. The GCA only writes checks to individual students. If you want the money to be administered by your institution, you must make those arrangements yourself.

5. Can I read examples of previously funded proposals?  
No, these are not made available.

6. Does the five-page limit for proposals include the bibliography and figures?  
Yes, absolutely.

7. Are proposals considered that emphasize the social-sciences aspects of restoration?  
Yes. Although the fellowships have thus far been awarded for biological research, we welcome proposals for research into the social aspects as well. Note that the SER definition includes “cultural practices.”

8. When can I expect to receive the money?  
The Garden Club of America usually mails checks in April.

9. What are some tips on improving my proposal?  
Choose a title that clearly and concisely describes your proposed work. Do not go over the five-page limit. Avoid terms that require value judgments (e.g., success). Include a rationale for how the proposed research will advance the science of restoration ecology and the practice of ecological restoration.