

Horticultural qualifications



Being involved in the school garden may have inspired you to pursue a career in horticulture. Alternatively, you may already be in work and would like a change in career. There are many courses and routes to choose from depending on your skills and experience, and what type of job you want to do. This fact sheet gives guidance and information to help you on your journey towards a career in horticulture.

Qualifications in school

There are some horticultural courses that can be studied in school, the modules of which map easily to subjects in the National Curriculum. One example is the National Open College Network's (NOCN's) qualifications in Skills Towards Enabling Progression (Step-UP) (QCF) www.nocn.org.uk/page/20365/step-up. These are an innovative range of credit-based qualifications; developed to accredit a wide variety of activities engaged in by learners aged 14 years and over.

Designed to meet the needs of a wide range of learners, providers can use the units available to create individualised learning programmes tailored to a learner's needs, whilst also enabling them to achieve or work towards a national qualification.

The qualifications are approved within the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) at Entry Level (Entry 3) and Level 1 and encompass the principles of Foundation Learning. See case study below.

Case study

Chace Extended Learning Centre

Chace ELC initially worked with Garden Organic to map across the Organic Gardening Certificate to see how they could deliver gardening as part of their curriculum. Garden Organic devised a 12-week plan that involved different aspects of Level 2 wider Key Skills (Improving Own Learning, Working With Others, and Problem Solving). Pupils at the centre did this by working in their own allotment garden, keeping chickens and selling eggs, and working with a local SEN school. One of the problem solving exercises was to follow a brief to devise a gardening solution, eg raised beds for disabled students. The pupils then made and installed the beds for the school.

Also, the (NOCN) units were delivered as part of the Step-UP qualifications. Students could do one or more units and this formed part of their overall qualification award.

Other qualifications have been delivered by a Food for Life Partnership Flagship school. The AQA Unit awards for KS3 (recognition of achievement certificates) and the City and Guilds Practical Horticulture Skills 7573-01 at three grades Award, Certificate and Diploma (QCF Level 1, this equals a 'D' at GCSE).

Further Education

Following school, full and part-time courses are available at Further Education colleges. There are a number of courses available which are structured in different ways including, traditional study skills, vocational competence-based qualifications or work related. Work related courses

offer a mix of theory and practice that may also include an element of work experience. The courses on offer vary greatly across the regions so contact your local college to find out more or visit www.hotcourses.com for up-to-date information.

Higher Education

A wide variety of higher-level courses are on offer at University. Generally, these follow a course of academic study/research. To find out the course details and entry requirements contact the University direct.

From September 2012, there will be an Organic Horticulture degree course offered by Liss Ard Country Estate www.lissardestate.com at the University College Cork. The course will be accredited by the university's school of biological, earth and environmental sciences www.ucc.ie

Some colleges also offer high-level courses, eg Pershore College offer a 2-year HND in Organic Horticulture www.warwickshire.ac.uk.

Other providers

Opportunities to study also exist with other providers such as the Soil Association Organic Farm School www.soilassociation.org/Takeaction/Learning/Organicfarmschool. Supported by the Daylesford Foundation they offer a series of hands-on courses in growing your own food, rearing animals, cooking and rural crafts. The courses cater to all skill levels and provide the opportunity to learn from organic farmers with personal experience.

Kew Gardens run the Kew Diploma in Horticulture. This offers a broad-based training in amenity and botanical horticulture. www.kew.org.uk

The Royal Horticultural Society offers a range of qualifications to meet the needs of all those wishing to develop their horticultural knowledge and skills, from the Level 1 Award in Practical Horticulture through to the Master of Horticulture. www.rhs.org.uk

LANTRA is the government recognized sector skills council for the environment and land-based sector. They supply mainly one-day courses, more suited to growers and farmers. www.lantra.co.uk

A wide range of courses is available on the Permaculture Association website www.permaculture.org.uk/courses

Further information

Garden Organic www.gardenorganic.org.uk

Food for Life Partnership Food Growing Manual – Silver and Gold booklet

SG2.7 Land-based courses/training

SG2.8 Land-based careers

www.gardenorganic.org.uk/growyourown/resources_for_schools.php