

# RHS Level 3 and 4 Diploma in Horticultural Practice

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Factsheet

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# RHS Level 3 and 4 Diploma in Horticultural Practice

## Overview

The RHS Level 3 and Level 4 Diploma is a two year work based qualification, designed to give a broad overview of the theory, practice and management of horticulture. RHS diploma students work at RHS Garden Wisley, alongside studying the theory of horticulture through eight different modules per year.

As the UK's foremost horticultural charity, the RHS offers its students unique training and learning experiences unparalleled in the industry. Our accredited practical training courses give students a solid and recognised basis from which to go on to further study or employment. The Level 4 Diploma is a continuation from the Level 3 Diploma in Horticultural Practice available at RHS Garden Wisley.

As employees of the RHS, students receive a salary at the same time as learning. Working alongside expert RHS Horticulturists throughout two years teaches our students vital work and employability skills, at the same time as achieving horticultural excellence. Students also have access to our Science and Advisory teams, as well as the world-class horticultural collections of the RHS Lindley Library.

Students spend approximately a third of their working time on learner experiences including lectures, trips, skills master-classes and visits to RHS Chelsea Flower Show. Students are allocated self study time and assessments take place throughout the year by a variety of methods designed to test both horticultural and communication skills.





# Year 1 - Level 3 Diploma in Horticultural Practice

## Course content

The course is made up of eight compulsory modules per year, supported by further, non- assessed training to enhance experiences and to develop additional skills. In the first year students study the Level 3 Diploma in Horticultural Practice, moving on to Level 4 in year 2.

## Induction

An introduction to the garden and to the course itself. Students become acquainted with staff and how the course is structured. Academic work is introduced with support on producing quality coursework and managing time effectively. (not assessed)

## Horticultural Taxonomy, Botany and Plantsmanship (part 1)

This is an introduction to the structure and classification of plants, and the tools employed in defining and ordering the plant kingdom. This module teaches the knowledge and skills involved in successful plant identification and helps understanding of the underlying taxonomic systems.

## Horticultural History, Philosophy and Design

Those who work in historical gardens must have an understanding of the context of the place. This component looks at the history of garden design and plant collections, before covering the function which horticulture now fulfils in society. The module will then look at garden design and design principles, and the possible future directions in which horticulture may evolve.

## Horticultural operations

This covers core skills required to successfully operate in a garden situation. The main subjects covered are plant collections management, turf care, tree management, hazard identification and risk assessment.

## Plant health (part 1)

Intended to inform about the current issues in plant health and to equip students with the tools needed to facilitate integrated approaches to pest management. Subjects will include pest and disease identification, pest lifecycles, monitoring, prevention, control and phytosanitary concerns.

## Plant care and establishment

Running throughout the year, Plant Care and Establishment gives a thorough overview of the skills required to successfully care for plants in different settings. It covers plant selection, methods of establishment as well as management of different styles of planting including weed control, pruning and seasonal clearance.



## Productive growing

This module provides an overview of growing edible crops including annual and perennial vegetables, soft fruit and top fruit. The growing cycle from propagation to harvest is covered, as well as maintenance, pest and disease control and how to maintain productivity.

## Propagation

An introduction to and overview of the theory and practice of horticultural propagation necessary for work in an ornamental garden. The theoretical basis of different types of plant propagation are covered, including sexual and vegetative methods. Methods will be demonstrated and put into practice to allow learners to gain a thorough understanding of the methods available.

## Soils and growing media

An in-depth look at the root zone to inform on how to keep plants happy and healthy. Students learn about different soil types and structures, and how to accurately analyse these for the most informative results. Soil amelioration for different purposes is covered, as well as a look at growing media and associated environmental concerns.

## Additional skills

Students are trained in a suite of skills including IT, communication, presentation and professionalism, designed to ensure excellent competencies when going out into the workplace. (not assessed)



# Year 2 - Level 4 Diploma in Horticultural Practice

## Horticultural management

Students can learn the core skills required to successfully manage a garden throughout the year. This module covers business practices, people management, health and safety, the environment and various further skills increasingly necessary for the successful running of a public garden.

## Ornamental planting

This looks at different styles of ornamental planting and the issues associated with each. Students will look how to design planting schemes with good plantsmanship in mind, and how to best maintain areas with different planting styles.

## Horticultural taxonomy, botany and plantsmanship (part 2)

Providing further knowledge of horticultural taxonomy and botany, it encompassing a more in-depth look at plant families including phenotypes and genetics. The module will also look at the problems of invasive alien species, and the purpose and future of herbariums and seed banks.

## Research project

This is an opportunity for student centred learning on an approved subject of personal choice. Critical thought, interpretation and analysis are required.

## Plant health (part 2)

Further study on plant health and the current issues facing horticulture will be provided in this module. The component covers biosecurity, risk analysis, integrated pest management, and phytosanitary concerns.

## Garden design

A look at garden design and project management. This includes design knowledge and awareness, drawing skills, budgeting and spatial management.

## Landscape construction

Concentrating on the skills needed to implement new planting schemes and designs, students will undertake initial site surveys, as well landscape detailing, hard landscaping knowledge and skills.

## Propagation and protected growing environments

Further propagation techniques will be explored, along with a look at growing plants under glass, including technology and specimen management.

## Design and build project

This is an opportunity for students to put into practice the skills they have learned on modules throughout the two years at Wisley. (not assessed)

## Additional skills

Students are trained in a suite of skills including IT, communication, presentation and professionalism, designed to ensure excellent competencies when going out into the workplace. (not assessed)



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## Learning and assessment

Learning takes place within garden placements and through a formal lecture series at RHS Wisley. Tutors are experts in their field and use the garden's significant resources in hands-on teaching sessions.

Assessments are carried out in a variety of ways to allow everyone's skills to shine. Both practical and academic skills contribute to the Diploma.

Final assessments include:

- Work based assessment
- Essays and reports
- Identification tests
- Planting scheme
- Skills journal
- Survey and garden design

## Entry requirements

Before starting on the course you will need:

- Level 2 Diploma or the Horticultural Operative Standard.
- Six month's practical work experience in a horticultural environment.
- Enthusiasm to learn more about the science and art of horticulture.



# Frequently asked questions

## Q: Is the Diploma full-time?

A: Diploma Students are employed by the RHS on a full-time basis on a two year (fixed-term) contract. A flexible approach to working (e.g. weekend work will be required on a regular basis, and evening work will be required from time to time).

## Q: Is accommodation available?

A: Diploma students have shared, self-catering accommodation available in Wisley village. This consists of shared housing of between two to five people. Each student has a single study bedroom and access to a shared lounge and kitchen/dining facilities. The cost of RHS accommodation is deducted from remuneration.

## Q: Who can apply?

A: The RHS is an inclusive employer and welcomes applicants from all backgrounds. Anyone can apply as long as you meet the above entry requirements and have the right to work in the UK. A good working knowledge of English is essential and evidence will be requested.

## Q: What can I do after I have completed The L3 & L4 Diploma in Horticultural Practice?

A: After achieving the Diploma in Horticultural Practice, you will be equipped with the confidence, skills and theoretical and practical knowledge to further yourself in the industry and within your chosen field.

## Q: What does the Diploma programme entail?

A: Diploma students rotate through ten departments in the Garden. The course also comprises a detailed lecture and masterclass programme, and students complete various pieces of assessed coursework.

## Next steps...

Applications are open in December and January for a September start. Vacancies are advertised on the Diploma web page.



For more information and to find out how to apply, either scan the QR code or visit [rhs.org.uk/hortdiploma](https://rhs.org.uk/hortdiploma)

