



Sharing the best in Gardening

## RHS Qualifications

### RHS Level 3 Certificate in the Principles of Garden Planning, Construction and Planting

#### Qualification Specification

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## **1. RHS Qualifications Contact Details**

RHS Qualifications is the Awarding Organisation of the Royal Horticultural Society.

RHS Qualifications  
RHS Garden Wisley  
Woking  
Surrey  
GU23 6QB  
UK

Tel: 01483 226500

Email: [qualifications@rhs.org.uk](mailto:qualifications@rhs.org.uk)

Approved Centre Web Portal: [www.rhsq.org.uk](http://www.rhsq.org.uk)

## **2. Equality and Diversity Policy Statement**

RHS Qualifications is committed to policies that will promote equal opportunities in all its operations, regardless of age, disability, ethnic origin, gender, marital status, religion, sexual orientation or any other factor.

RHS Qualifications is committed to ensuring that there is no unfair discrimination in any of its operations and will take into account all current legislation in relation to the equality of opportunity.

RHS Qualifications will constantly monitor and review its policies and practices pertaining to equal opportunities, to ensure that they remain consistent with its equal opportunities objectives and continue to comply with all relevant legislation.

RHS Qualifications will strive to make awareness of and respect for equality and diversity, an integral part of the culture of the organisation.

A copy of the RHS Qualifications Equality and Diversity Policy is available on the Approved Centre Web Portal.

### **3. RHS Level 3 Certificate in the Principles of Garden Planning, Construction and Planting**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This qualification provides a route to employment in professional horticulture by assessing knowledge of the scientific principles underpinning horticultural practices, and supports career development for those already working in the profession. It also provides a foundation for further learning or training in the field of horticulture.

There are no pre-requisites for entry to the qualification.

The qualification is accredited within the Qualifications and Credit Framework.

Accreditation Number: 500/8547/5

#### **3.2 Credit Value**

The qualification has a credit value of 15.

This equates to 150 learning hours. Learning time is defined as the time taken by learners at the level of the qualification, on average, to complete the learning outcomes of the units to the standard determined by the assessment criteria.

#### **3.3 Teaching Pattern**

The qualification is designed to be studied on a part-time basis. No particular teaching pattern is specified, and centres offering courses leading to the qualification are free to define their own teaching structure and teaching hours.

### 3.4 Qualification Structure

The qualification will be awarded to those who gain the credits for the following four mandatory units:

RHS Ref	Unit	Credits	Level
R3111	Understanding garden survey techniques and design principles Unit reference number T/601/3633	4	3
R3112	Understanding the selection and use of landscaping elements in the garden Unit reference number A/601/3794	4	3
R3113	Understanding the setting out and construction of landscaping elements in the garden Unit reference number D/601/3836	4	3
R3114	Understanding a range of specialist elements in the establishment of garden and urban plantings Unit reference number T/601/3857	3	3

### 3.5 Assessment

Each unit will be assessed by a separate written examination covering all learning outcomes specified in the unit.

Examinations must be taken in a centre approved by RHS Qualifications, or under arrangements for exceptional supervision agreed by RHS Qualifications.

Examinations must be conducted in accordance with the RHS Regulations for the Conduct of Examinations.

Examinations will be offered twice a year in February and June.

### 3.6 Language

Examinations will be offered in English.

### 3.7 Grading

Credits for a unit will be awarded to a candidate who achieves a mark of 50% or more in the written examination for that unit.

Where a candidate achieves a mark of 70% or more in the examination for the unit, the credits for the unit will be awarded with commendation.

<b>RHS Ref</b>	<b>Unit</b>	<b>Mark</b>	<b>Pass with Commendation</b>	<b>Pass</b>
R3111	Understanding garden survey techniques and design principles	80	56	40
R3112	Understanding the selection and use of landscaping elements in the garden	80	56	40
R3113	Understanding the setting out and construction of landscaping elements in the garden	80	56	40
R3114	Understanding a range of specialist elements in the establishment of garden and urban plantings	60	42	30

Where a candidate receives credits with commendation in all four mandatory units, the qualification will be awarded with commendation.

### 4. Approved Centres

Centres wishing to offer examinations leading to RHS qualifications must be approved by RHS Qualifications.

Applications for approval should be sent to the Quality Assurance and Relationships Officer at the contact details in section 1.

### 5. Candidate Registration

Candidates should be registered for examinations in the units of the qualification through the RHS Qualifications Web Portal.

Approved Centres undertake to obtain on behalf of their learners a Unique Learner Number (ULN) and a learner record, unless the learner chooses not to have one.

If centres supply an email address for candidates at the time of registration, candidates will be invited to open an account on the RHS Qualifications Web Portal, and will be able to view their examination history, their current registrations, and their results when available.

## **6. Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration**

RHS Qualifications is committed to ensuring fair assessment for all candidates, and will facilitate access to its qualifications through reasonable adjustments to assessment arrangements for candidates with an identified specific need. An example of a reasonable adjustment which could be made is the production of a modified examination paper for a candidate with a visual impairment.

Special consideration is given following the examination to candidates who are present for the examination but may have been disadvantaged by temporary illness, injury or adverse circumstances which arose at, or near, the time of examination.

Full guidance is provided in the document 'Guidance to Centres for Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration'. The document is available on the RHS website ([www.rhs.org.uk](http://www.rhs.org.uk)), the RHS Qualifications Approved Centre Web Portal, or can be obtained from RHS Qualifications.

Applications for reasonable adjustments or special consideration must be made by the Approved Centre on behalf of the candidate. Application must be made within specified timescales.

## **7. Enquiry about Results service**

The following service is available to candidates who have a query regarding their examination result:

### **Re-mark and Feedback**

Re-marking of the examination paper by an independent examiner.  
Feedback will be provided identifying areas of strength and weakness with constructive suggestions for improvement.

Candidates requesting a re-mark need to be aware that grades may go down as a result of the re-marking.

Applications for the 'Enquiry about Results Service' must be made through the Approved Centre where the candidate registered for the examination. This service will be available for 28 days from the date of release of the results to Approved Centres on the RHS webportal.

## **8. Examination Dates**

For a full list of examination dates please see the Qualifications and Credit Framework Examination Dates, this document is available on the Qualifications page on the RHS website and on the RHS Webportal.

## **9. Fees**

For a full list of fees please see the Qualifications and Credit Framework Fees Notice, this document is available on the Qualifications page on the RHS website and on the RHS Webportal.

All fees are payable prior to confirmation of service or entry for the examination.

### **Late Entries**

RHS Qualifications publishes annually, and distributes to Approved Centres, the closing dates of entry for each examination for the following year.

Entries submitted after the published closing date will be subject to a late entry fee. The total fee charged for late entries is twice the standard examination fee for each unit

### **Replacement Certificate (if lost, damaged or destroyed)**

The fee for a replacement certificate can be found on the Qualifications and Credit Framework Fees Notice. Please send your request to the Qualifications Department.

### **Re-mark & Feedback**

The fee for a remark and feedback can be found on the Qualifications and Credit Framework Fees Notice.

If a re-mark results in an upgrade of the result, the fee paid will be refunded.

## **10. Exemptions**

The 'Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework' allow exemptions to be granted for units based upon certificated achievement in other qualifications. RHS Qualifications will grant exemption from specified units in RHS QCF qualifications where a candidate has passed certain components of RHS qualifications in the National Qualifications Framework (current RHS qualifications).

There are no exemptions offered for this qualification.

## **11. Appeals Procedure**

An Appeals procedure exists to conduct appeals lodged by candidates against decisions made by RHS Qualifications, concerning their examination performance, the granting of an award and/or the closure of their entry to an award on academic grounds.

The procedure is also followed in cases where there is irregularity or malpractice in the conduct of examinations and where RHS Qualifications has imposed a penalty on a candidate, tutor or invigilator, and the Centre wishes to appeal against this decision after results are published.

A copy of the procedure is available on the RHS Qualifications Web Portal and on the RHS website.



## **12. Policy on Malpractice**

Malpractice consists of those acts which undermine the integrity and validity of the assessment or examination, the certification of qualifications and/or damage the authority of those responsible for conducting the assessment, examination and certification.

RHS Qualifications does not tolerate actions or attempted actions of malpractice by learners or centres in connection with RHS qualifications. RHS Qualifications may impose penalties and/or sanctions on candidates or centres where incidents, or attempted incidents, of malpractice have been proven.

A copy of the full policy is available on the RHS Qualifications Web Portal and on the RHS website.

## Understanding garden survey techniques and design principles

**RHS reference number: R3111**

**Unit reference number: T/601/3633**

**Unit guided learning hours: 26**

**Unit Level: Level 3**

**Credit Value: 4**

Unit purpose and aim(s): This unit will provide an understanding of garden styles, site appraisal and survey techniques, and the principles that underpin garden design.

### Learning Outcomes

The learner will:

1. Understand the historical development of garden design styles.
2. Understand how to conduct a site appraisal and interpret the results
3. Know how to develop a client brief
4. Know a range of basic survey techniques

### Assessment Criteria

The learner can:

- 1.1 Describe representative characteristics of the following garden design styles: Moghul, Moorish, Medieval, Renaissance (Italian, French and Dutch), English Landscape, Victorian, Edwardian, Japanese, Modernist, Contemporary.
- 2.1 State the main factors to be assessed for an overall site appraisal.
- 2.2 Review the advantages and limitations which site factors may impose on garden planning and layout, to include accessibility for disabled users.
- 3.1 Identify the information which needs to be gathered from the client, to include: likes and dislikes, aspirations, functional requirements (e.g. utility, play area for children, restricted mobility), ornamentation, relaxation, entertaining or food production, degree of maintenance and budget.
- 3.2 Describe how to record relevant data using a client questionnaire, audio and visual methods.
- 4.1 Describe the linear surveying of a site using appropriate equipment to include tapes and automatic levels.
- 4.2 Describe the surveying of a site to record variation in levels using automatic level and staff.
- 4.3 Interpret survey measurements from standard documentation.
- 4.4 Produce scale drawings using survey data, including the correct use of graphic symbols, scale and nomenclature.

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| <p>5. Understand how site characteristics may influence garden design.</p> | <p>5.1 Explain the influence of the following on choice of design: altitude, orientation, aspect, changes in level, pollution, soil type, soil depth, soil pH, soil water content, views, screening, degree of exposure or shade, microclimate.</p> <p>5.2 Explain how a given design may be used to enhance the attributes and offset the limitations imposed by the site.</p> |
| <p>6. Understand the principles and elements of design.</p>                | <p>6.1 Explain the principles and elements of design: to include movement, rhythm, scale, balance, form, texture, space, colour, proportion, harmony, unity, symmetry and asymmetry, focal point, borrowed landscape.</p> <p>6.2 Describe examples of the application of the elements in 6.1 to the design process.</p>                                                         |

# Understanding the selection and use of landscaping elements in the garden

**RHS reference number: R3112**

**Unit reference number: A/601/3794**

**Unit guided learning hours: 26**

**Unit Level: Level 3**

**Credit Value: 4**

Unit purpose and aim(s): This unit provides an understanding of the contribution of hard and soft landscape features to the design and function of ornamental gardens.

## Learning Outcomes

The learner will:

1. Understand the contribution made by hard landscaping features to design and function.

## Assessment Criteria

The learner can:

- |    |                                                                                       |     |                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. | Understand the contribution made by hard landscaping features to design and function. | 1.1 | Evaluate how a range of hard landscaping features contribute to the design and function of an ornamental garden. To include paths, patios, driveways, walls, fences, pergolas, ramps and steps. |
|    |                                                                                       | 1.2 | Evaluate the range of hard landscape materials for horizontal and vertical uses in the ornamental garden.                                                                                       |
|    |                                                                                       | 1.3 | Evaluate a range of surface materials for use in children's play areas.                                                                                                                         |
|    |                                                                                       | 1.4 | Evaluate the suitability of hard landscaping materials and structures for the use of people with mobility restrictions and visual impairments.                                                  |
|    |                                                                                       | 1.5 | Evaluate a range of materials for use in rock gardens, water features and containers.                                                                                                           |
|    |                                                                                       | 1.6 | Review how considerations of safety may influence the choice of structures and materials used in the garden.                                                                                    |
|    |                                                                                       | 1.7 | Review how considerations of sustainability may influence the choice of structures and materials used in the garden.                                                                            |
| 2. | Understand the function of drainage systems in the garden.                            | 2.1 | Evaluate the range of drainage systems available for use in a domestic garden, to include intercept or French drains, pipe drains and soakaways.                                                |

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| <p>3. Understand the contribution made by soft landscaping features to design and function.</p> | <p>3.1 Evaluate the contribution of a range of soft landscaping features to the overall design and function of a garden, to include hedges, beds, borders, trees, ground cover, rock and water features and containers.</p>                                          |
|                                                                                                 | <p>3.2 Describe the use of planting plans for beds and borders.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|                                                                                                 | <p>3.3 State details of the decorative merits, height, spread and site requirements of a selection of plants to include: alpine; aquatic and marginal; herbaceous; woody plants; climbers; ground cover; plants for seasonal display; plants for sensory impact.</p> |
|                                                                                                 | <p>3.4 Describe a range of plants to ensure continuity of interest in the garden.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                |
|                                                                                                 | <p>3.5 Describe a range of plants to cope with permanently arid and permanently wet soils.</p>                                                                                                                                                                       |
|                                                                                                 | <p>3.6 Describe five plants suitable for each of the following difficult situations: north-facing walls, dry shade, shallow chalk, heavy clay, coastal areas.</p>                                                                                                    |
|                                                                                                 | <p>3.7 Describe a range of calcifuge plants.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <p>4. Understand the contribution made by turf to the design and function of a garden.</p>      | <p>4.1 Describe the design possibilities of grassed areas (including mowing effects and heights, turf mazes).</p>                                                                                                                                                    |
|                                                                                                 | <p>4.2 Describe a range of seed mixtures suitable for a utility lawn, fine turf and shady areas, and wildflower meadow.</p>                                                                                                                                          |
|                                                                                                 | <p>4.3 Describe the annual maintenance routines for a utility lawn, a fine turf lawn, a shady lawn and a wildflower meadow, including the appropriate equipment.</p>                                                                                                 |
|                                                                                                 | <p>4.4 Describe plant alternatives to grass for lawn areas.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

## Understanding the setting out and construction of landscaping elements in the garden

**RHS reference number: R3113**

**Unit reference number: D/601/3836**

**Unit guided learning hours: 26**

**Unit level: Level 3**

**Credit Value: 4**

Unit purpose and aim(s): This unit provides an understanding of the principles of setting out and constructing hard-landscape features in gardens.

### Learning Outcomes

The learner will:

1. Understand the practical procedures for setting out a site to scale plans and drawings.
2. Understand the reasons for correct soil movement and storage during construction works.
3. Understand the factors which determine the type of drainage system required in various situations.

### Assessment Criteria

The learner can:

- 1.1 Describe how scale drawings are interpreted to set out the major features of a design on the ground.
- 1.2 Describe how to set out the required levels on site.
- 1.3 Describe the sequence of works involved in the realisation of a design.
- 2.1 Describe the correct handling, storage and re-instatement of soil during site construction; to include separation, angle of repose and maintenance of soil quality during storage.
- 2.2 Describe the procedures required to reinstate the soil to the levels specified in the design.
- 2.3 Describe how biosecurity measures are used to prevent the distribution of pests and diseases through soil handling/storage and reinstatement.
- 3.1 Describe the construction of an intercept or French drain to collect run-off, a pipe drain system to lower the water table and a soakaway to drain a localised wet area.

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| 4. Know materials and construction procedures for paths, patios and driveways for parking and light use.  | <p>4.1 Define the terms 'flexible', 'rigid' and 'permeable' in relation to paving.</p> <p>4.2 Describe a range of appropriate surface materials for paths, patios and driveways for parking and light use. To include: concrete, gravel, bricks, block paving, natural and artificial stone and paving.</p> <p>4.3 Specify appropriate foundations for (i) a concrete path, (ii) an aggregate driveway (iii) a slab or natural stone patio (iv) a permeable hard-standing area.</p> <p>4.4 Outline the procedures for preparing the site and laying foundations for the situations mentioned in 4.3.</p> <p>4.5 Outline the procedures for laying the surface materials mentioned in 4.2.</p> <p>4.6 Specify appropriate edging materials for the situations outlined in 4.3 and describe their installation.</p> <p>4.7 Describe the construction of an area of permeable hard standing (to include reinforced grass and permeable paving).</p> |
| 5. Know materials and construction procedures for steps and ramps.                                        | <p>5.1 Specify appropriate foundations for one step and one ramp.</p> <p>5.2 Specify two appropriate materials for a step and two for a ramp.</p> <p>5.3 Describe the construction of one type of step and one type of ramp.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 6. Know materials and construction procedures for low garden walls, retaining walls, fences and pergolas. | <p>6.1 Specify materials suitable for the construction of the following: (i) a single-skin garden wall; (ii) a double-skinned or retaining garden wall; (iii) a low wall for a raised bed; (iv) one modular fence; (v) one non-modular fence and (vi) a pergola.</p> <p>6.2 Outline procedures for erecting: (i) a retaining garden wall; (ii) a low wall for a raised bed; (iii) a fence; (iv) a pergola.</p> <p>6.3 Specify foundations (where appropriate) for each of the constructions named in 6.1.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

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| 7. Know materials and construction procedures for a water feature. | 7.1 Specify suitable materials for the construction of (i) a formal pond (ii) an informal pond. |
|                                                                    | 7.2 Outline the procedures for constructing (i) a formal pond (ii) an informal pond.            |
| 8. Know materials and construction procedures for a rock garden.   | 8.1 Specify a range of materials suitable for the construction of a rock garden.                |
|                                                                    | 8.2 Specify an appropriate method for the construction of a rock garden.                        |
| 9. Understand risk assessments.                                    | 9.1 Determine the elements of risk in operations associated with this unit.                     |



## Understanding a range of specialist elements in the establishment of garden and urban plantings

**RHS reference number:** R3114

**Unit reference number:** T/601/3857

**Unit guided learning hours:** 20

**Unit level:** Level 3

**Credit Value:** 3

Unit purpose and aim(s): This unit provides an understanding of the opportunities that exist for the use of specialist elements in the planting of a variety of gardens, including urban and amenity green spaces.

### Learning Outcomes

The learner will:

1. Understand the design principles and practices of using amenity bedding schemes.
2. Know the typical components of a range of specialist garden areas.
3. Understand specialist pruning for effect.
4. Know a range of options available for urban gardening.

### Assessment Criteria

The learner can:

- 1.1 Describe the design principles and practices used in amenity bedding schemes.
- 1.2 Review the spacing requirements of spring and summer bedding plants including bulbs.
- 1.3 Produce a work schedule covering a 12-month period for a situation in 1.1.
- 1.4 Describe specialist forms of bedding scheme, including carpet, three-dimensional and subtropical.
- 2.1 Describe the typical elements (including plants) of the following specialist areas: woodland; wildlife; sensory; low maintenance amenity; grass or steppe (prairie); and potager.
- 2.2 Describe the annual maintenance of the areas listed in 2.1.
- 3.1 Describe the use of pruning to produce decorative forms of ornamental trees and shrubs, including pollarding, pleaching, topiary, cloud pruning and wall-training.
- 3.2 Describe the use of pruning to produce specialist decorative forms suitable for fruit growing, including fan, espalier, cordon, stepover and festoon.
- 4.1 Describe a range of options available in an urban situation, to include small front gardens; courtyards; container gardens; roof gardens; living walls; street plantings; conservatories and community gardens.
- 4.2 Identify any specific establishment and maintenance issues associated with the options in 4.1

- 5. Understand how water sustainability can be built into a garden.
  - 5.1 Describe how modern gardens can be adapted to conserve water and reduce run-off, including green roofs; water collection, storage and recycling; permeable surfaces; and mulches.