



RHS Qualifications

RHS Level 3 Diploma in Horticultural Practice

Qualification Specification

September 2025

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1. RHS Qualifications Contact Details

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

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UK

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RHS website: www.rhs.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 Diploma in Horticultural Practice

3.1 Introduction

The Level 3 Diploma in Horticultural Practice provides a route to employment in professional horticulture by assessing a wide range of horticultural knowledge and skills gained in a work-based environment within an RHS garden. It also provides a foundation for further learning or training in the field of horticulture

The RHS Level 3 Diploma in Horticultural Practice is offered solely by the RHS School of Horticulture and is only available to employees of the Royal Horticultural Society.

Qualification Accreditation Number: 601/8097/3

Qualification Level: Level 3

3.2 Total Qualification Time and Guided Learning Hours

The Guided Learning Hours (GLH) for this qualification are **320**. Guided Learning means the time spent under the direct supervision of a tutor or instructor. This includes classroom-based learning supervised by a tutor, practical instruction or supervised work-based learning and all forms of assessment carried out under the direct supervision of a tutor or instructor.

The Total Qualification Time (TQT) for this qualification is **1612**. TQT consists of Guided Learning Hours plus all time spent on activities under the direction, but not supervision, of a tutor or instructor. This includes independent research and learning, unsupervised coursework, and unsupervised work-based learning.

3.3 Teaching Pattern

The qualification is designed to be studied on a full-time basis between 1 September and 31 August in one of the RHS gardens. Tuition takes the form of blocks of classroom based study, a structured programme of practical instruction and work-based learning in the garden, practical project work, and coursework.

3.4 Entry Requirements

Candidates must be employees of the Royal Horticultural Society.

Candidates are expected, as a minimum, to hold a level 2 horticultural qualification such as a National Certificate in Horticulture, or an RHS Level 2 Certificate in the Principles of Horticulture or similar. Additionally, candidates should also have some practical experience in a professional horticultural environment.

Candidates must be IT literate, with the ability to produce word processed coursework, work with digital images, access the internet and use email.

Candidates should have a full driving licence.

Before entry to the qualification, candidates must complete the RHS Induction and Core Skills module.

3.5 Qualification Structure

The qualification will be awarded to those candidates who successfully complete the following components:

Component	Level
Horticultural Operations	3
Plant Care and Establishment	3
Horticultural Taxonomy, Botany and Plantsmanship	3
Plant Health	3
Productive Growing	3
Propagation	3
Horticultural History, Philosophy and Design	3
Soils and Growing Media	3

3.6 Assessment

Assessment will take place throughout the course. A range of assessment methods will be used including:

- Practical competence assessments
- Coursework
- Skills Journal
- Practical project work
- Identification tests
- Work based assessment

3.7 Language

Assessments will be offered in English.

3.8 Learning Resources

There is a wide range of books and other learning resources published which support the studies of those learning horticulture. RHS Qualifications does not recommend or endorse any specific learning resources as meeting the needs of learners studying for RHS qualifications. Learners are encouraged to seek guidance from their tutors on which resources best support their studies, or to choose the most appropriate resources for their needs from the wealth of material available.

3.9 Grading

The qualification is graded using marks and weighting. The qualification is graded as:

Fail 0 – 49.9%
Pass 50 – 59.9 %
Merit 60 – 69.9 %
Distinction 70+ %

Although the work-based learning element of the qualification must be successfully completed in order to pass the qualification, the grading is derived from the assessment tasks set within the components

4. Approved Centres

This qualification is only offered by the RHS School of Horticulture to employees of the Royal Horticultural Society.

5. Candidate Registration

Candidates should be registered for the qualification through the RHS Qualifications Web Portal.

6 Reasonable Adjustments

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 assessment paper for a candidate with a visual impairment.

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), the RHS Qualifications Approved Centre Web Portal, or can be obtained from RHS Qualifications.

Applications for reasonable adjustment must be made by the Approved Centre on behalf of the candidate. Application must be made within specified timescales.

7. Replacement Certificate (if lost, damaged or destroyed)

Replacement certificates can be obtained from the RHS Qualifications Department. A fee is payable for this service.

8. Appeals Procedure

An Appeals procedure exists to conduct appeals lodged by candidates against decisions made by RHS Qualifications, concerning their 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 assessment and where RHS Qualifications has imposed a penalty on a candidate.

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

9. Policy on Malpractice and Maladministration

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.

10. Qualification Components	
Horticultural Operations	
Component Level: 3	
Component Overview: This component covers some of the core skills required to successfully operate in a garden situation. The main subjects covered are: plant collections management; turf care, tree management; and hazard identification and risk assessment.	
Learning Outcomes The learner will:	Assessment Criteria The learner can:
1 Be able to apply knowledge and understanding of the horticultural operations and processes.	1.1 Develop and apply knowledge and understanding of key horticultural operations and processes that underpin a public garden context.
	1.2 Develop and apply the knowledge and understanding of national/ international requirements of plant collection and tree management.
	1.3 Develop and apply knowledge and understanding of the importance of managing areas and plants, and apply appropriate management techniques, within a public garden context.
2 Be able to select and use a variety of methods, skills and horticultural techniques to a recognised standard.	2.1 Select and use appropriate personal protective equipment and clothing for the task.
	2.2 Select and use effectively a range of tools and equipment for the task.
	2.3 Select and use the appropriate method, skill and horticultural technique for the task.
	2.4 Clean and appropriately store tools equipment and materials after use.
	2.5 Carry out annual maintenance routines for a range of turfed areas.
	2.6 Establish and repair turf.
	2.7 Carry out planting, establishment and monitoring of trees for site and situation.
	2.8 Carry out pruning (maintenance, formative, regenerative, specialist) and training of trees.

		2.9	Carry out management of plant collections, selecting appropriate management techniques for the collection, within a public garden context.
3	Be able to document, analyse and interpret horticultural information and apply understanding to a public garden context.	3.1	Document, record and catalogue information clearly and coherently, using specialist vocabulary when appropriate.
		3.2	Use a range of skills and techniques to document, analyse, interpret and communicate information.
		3.3	Critically compare and analyse horticultural skills and operations delivery.
4	Understand the potential hazards and risks associated with horticultural operations in a public garden context.	4.1	Define risks associated with selected operations.
		4.2	Assess the hazards associated with the selected operation.
		4.3	Promote environmental good practice.
		4.4	Work in a way which maintains health and safety and is consistent with current legislation, codes of practice and any additional requirements.
		4.5	Maintain effective working relationships with all relevant people.

Plant Care and Establishment		
Component Level: 3		
Component Overview: Plant Care and Establishment aims to give a thorough overview of the skills required to successfully care for plants in different settings. It covers how to select plants in different situations, and how to establish them to give them the best chance of success. Maintenance of different styles of planting is covered, including weed control, pruning and seasonal clearance.		
Learning Outcomes The learner will:		Assessment Criteria The learner can:
1	Be able to apply knowledge and understanding of plant care and establishment operations and processes.	1.1 Develop and apply knowledge and understanding of key plant care and establishment operations and processes that underpin a public garden context.
		1.2 Apply understanding of interrelationship of photosynthesis, respiration and transpiration and how they can be manipulated for different horticultural situations.
		1.3 Select plant species adapted for specified environmental conditions and concepts.
		1.4 Develop and apply knowledge and understanding of specific care requirements of plant collections.
		1.5 Develop and apply understanding of the characteristics of a range of weeds and their methods of control within a public garden.
		1.6 Develop and apply understanding for the prevention of invasive plants.
2	Be able to select and use a variety of methods, skills and horticultural techniques to a recognised standard	2.1 Select and use appropriate personal protective equipment and clothing for the task.
		2.2 Select and use effectively a range of tools and equipment for the task.
		2.3 Select and use the appropriate method, skill and horticultural technique for the task.
		2.4 Clean and appropriately store tools equipment and materials after use.
		2.5 Carry out repotting and potting on a range of plants for different horticultural situations.
		2.6 Provide aftercare to promote growth and fruition

			and meet planting specifications.
		2.7	Position, plant and maintain a range of plants for different horticultural situations.
		2.8	Carry out formative, maintenance, regenerative and specialist pruning on a range of plants.
		2.9	Carry out seasonal clearance operations on a range of plants for different horticultural situations.
3	Be able to interpret horticultural information and apply understanding to a public garden context.	3.1	Document, record and communicate information clearly and coherently, using specialist vocabulary when appropriate.
		3.2	Critically compare and analyse horticultural skills and horticultural operations delivery.
		3.3	Plan appropriate planting and management techniques based on recognised plant requirements.
4	Understand the potential hazards and risks associated with plant care and establishment in a public garden context.	4.1	Define risks associated with selected operations.
		4.2	Assess the hazards associated with selected operations.
		4.3	Promote environmental good practice.
		4.4	Work in a way which maintains health and safety and is consistent with current legislation, codes of practice and any additional requirements.
		4.5	Maintain effective working relationships with all relevant people.

Horticultural Taxonomy, Botany and Plantsmanship

Component Level: 3

Component Overview: This component gives an introduction to the structure and classification of plants, and the tools employed in defining and ordering the plant kingdom. The component gives learners the knowledge and skills involved in successful plant identification and helps them to understand the underlying taxonomic systems.

Learning Outcomes The learner will:			Assessment Criteria The learner can:
1	Be able to interpret horticultural information and apply understanding of nomenclature and taxonomy in the naming of plants	1.1	Develop and apply knowledge and understanding of the botanical naming system of plants, using specialist vocabulary.
		1.2	Develop and apply knowledge and understanding of differences in approach for the classification of plants.
		1.3	Develop and apply knowledge and understanding of other influences in the classification of plants.
2	Be able to understand the structure and function of plant tissues and organs in the identification of plants	2.1	Document, record and present information clearly and coherently using specialist vocabulary, where appropriate.
		2.2	Identify plant groups and plant families using distinguishing morphological characteristics.
3	Be able to apply knowledge and understanding of plant taxonomy and nomenclature to identify plants	3.1	Organise and communicate information clearly and coherently using specialist vocabulary.
		3.2	Identify a range of plants and know their characteristics and decorative merits.
		3.3	Identify a range of weeds and invasive plants and know their characteristics.
		3.4	Work in a way which maintains health and safety and is consistent with current legislation, codes of practice and any additional requirements.

Plant Health		
Component Level: 3		
Component Overview: This component is intended to inform learners about the current issues in plant health and to equip them 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.		
Learning Outcomes The learner will:		Assessment Criteria The learner can:
1 Be able to apply knowledge and understanding of plant health to horticultural operations and processes.	1.1	Identify a range of pests, diseases and disorders and know their characteristics.
	1.2	Identify key points in the lifecycles of a range of pests.
	1.3	Develop and apply knowledge and understanding of cultural, biological and chemical methods of control for a range of pests, diseases and disorders.
	1.4	Identify basic biosecurity measures implemented in a public garden context
	1.5	Apply requirements of quarantine to the specified plant care and plant establishment sites.
2 Be able to select and use a variety of methods of control for pests, disease and disorder on specified sites within a public garden context.	2.1	Select and use appropriate personal protective equipment and clothing for the task.
	2.2	Select and use effectively a range of tools and equipment for the task.
	2.3	Clean and appropriately store tools equipment and materials after use.
	2.4	Facilitate integrated approaches to pest management in a public garden context.
	2.5	Carry out monitoring for the prevention of pests, diseases and disorders in a public garden context.
	2.6	Diagnose deficiencies and recommend remedial action appropriate for a public garden context.

3	Be able to interpret horticultural information and apply plant health management to a public garden context.	3.1	Interpret and apply specific care requirements for plant collections.
		3.2	Interpret and apply requirements of quarantine within a public garden context.
		3.3	Interpret and apply international/ national requirements, biosecurity and plant health regulations in the protection of plants for a public garden context.
		3.4	Document, record and communicate information clearly and coherently, using specialist vocabulary when, appropriate.
4	Understand the potential hazards and risks associated with plant health in a public garden context.	4.1	Define risks associated with the control of pests, diseases and disorders.
		4.2	Assess the hazards associated with the control of pests, diseases and disorders.
		4.3	Promote environmental good practice.
		4.4	Work in a way which maintains health and safety and is consistent with current legislation, codes of practice and any additional requirements.

Productive Growing		
Component Level: 3		
Component Overview: This component 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.		
Learning Outcomes The learner will:		Assessment Criteria The learner can:
1	Be able to apply knowledge and understanding of the horticultural operations and processes.	1.1 Develop and apply knowledge and understanding of productive growing operations and processes that underpin a public garden context.
		1.2 Plan the timing of the production of edible spaces for a public garden context.
		1.3 Select and use appropriate protective environments to propagate and establish a wide range of edible crops.
2	Be able to select and use a variety of methods, skills and horticultural techniques to propagate and establish edible crops to a recognised standard	2.1 Select and use appropriate personal protective equipment and clothing for the task.
		2.2 Select and use effectively a range of tools and equipment for the task.
		2.3 Select and use the appropriate method, skill and horticultural technique for the task.
		2.4 Clean and appropriately store tools equipment and materials after use.
		2.5 Carry out a range of horticultural operations to provide optimum growing conditions.
		2.6 Carry out a range of horticultural techniques to propagate and establish a wide range of edible crops.
		2.7 Harvest edible crops.
3	Be able to document, analyse and interpret horticultural information and apply understanding to a	3.1 Document, record and communicate information clearly and coherently, using specialist vocabulary when appropriate.

	public garden context.		
		3.2	Produce crop rotation and planting plans for edible crops within a public garden context.
		3.3	Interpret and apply specific care requirements of edible plant collections.
		3.4	Critically compare and analyse horticultural skills and horticultural operations delivery.
4	Understand the potential hazards and risks associated with growing edible plants in a public garden context.	4.1	Define risks associated with selected operations.
		4.2	Assess the hazards associated the selected operations.
		4.3	Promote environmental good practice.
		4.4	Work in a way which maintains health and safety and is consistent with current legislation, codes of practice and any additional requirements.

Propagation		
Component Level: 3		
Component Overview: 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.		
Learning Outcomes The learner will:		Assessment Criteria The learner can:
1	Be able to apply knowledge and understanding of the horticultural operations and processes.	1.1 Develop and apply knowledge and understanding of the range of propagation methods used in horticulture and their suitability for use in a public garden context.
2	Be able to select and use a variety of methods, skills and horticultural techniques to propagate and establish edible crops to a recognised standard	2.1 Select and use appropriate personal protective equipment and clothing for the task.
		2.2 Select and use effectively a range of tools and equipment for the task.
		2.3 Select and use the appropriate method, skill and horticultural technique for the task.
		2.4 Clean and appropriately store tools equipment and materials after use.
		2.5 Carry out the collection and preparation of propagation material for a range of propagation methods.
		2.6 Carry out a range of propagation techniques to a recognised standard.
3	Be able to document, analyse and interpret horticultural information and apply understanding to a public garden context.	3.1 Analyse and apply understanding of how seed anatomy, physiology and environmental factors affect different methods of propagation and seed conservation for a public garden context.
		3.2 Document, record and communicate information clearly and coherently, using specialist vocabulary when appropriate.
		3.3 Critically compare and analyse horticultural skills and horticultural operations delivery.

		3.4	Carry out propagation techniques in accordance with of legislative requirements.
4	Understand the potential hazards and risks associated with methods of propagation.	4.1	Define risks associated with methods of propagation.
		4.2	Assess the hazards associated with methods of propagation.
		4.3	Promote environmental good practice.
		4.4	Work in a way which maintains health and safety and is consistent with current legislation, codes of practice and any additional requirements.

Horticultural History, Philosophy and Design

Component Level: 3

Component Overview: 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 of plant collections, before covering the function which horticulture now fulfils in society. It will then look at garden design and design principles, and the possible future directions in which horticulture may evolve.

Learning Outcomes The learner will:		Assessment Criteria The learner can:	
1	Be able to understand how the principles and practices of horticultural design shape the future of horticulture.	1.1	Explain the principles and practices of garden design.
		1.2	Evaluate how working public gardens influence the application of design principles and practices.
		1.3	Describe the history of garden design and horticulture.
		1.4	Evaluate the changing role and function of plant collections over time.
		1.5	Evaluate the changing role and function of formal/ informal gardens over time.
		1.6	Evaluate the contribution made by hard landscaping and soft landscaping features to design and function of landscapes.
		1.7	Critically compare and analyse how principles and practices of garden design and horticulture evolve.
2	Be able to document, analyse and interpret horticultural information and apply understanding to public garden contexts.	2.1	Identify, select and collect evidence from a range of different sources.
		2.2	Use a range of skills and techniques to interpret, analyse, and communicate information.
		2.3	Document, record and present information clearly and coherently, using specialist vocabulary when appropriate.
		2.4	Carry out basic site surveys.

Soils and Growing Media

Component Level: 3

Component Overview: This component gives in-depth look at the root zone to inform how to keep plants healthy. Learners will 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 growing media and associated environmental concerns.

Learning Outcomes The learner will:			Assessment Criteria The learner can:
1	Be able to apply knowledge and understanding of soil and growing media operations and processes.	1.1	Develop and apply knowledge and understanding of the formation and properties of soils and different growing media.
		1.2	Develop and apply knowledge and understanding of the balance between plant growth, nutrients, air and water.
		1.3	Apply the calculations and operations required to adjust and improve soils and growing media to improve plant productivity.
		1.4	Develop and apply knowledge and understanding of legislative requirements in the movement and storage of soil, growing media and waste.
2	Be able to select and use a variety of methods, skills and horticultural techniques to a recognised standard	2.1	Select and use appropriate personal protective equipment and clothing for the task.
		2.2	Select and use effectively a range of tools and equipment for the task.
		2.3	Select and use the appropriate method, skill and horticultural technique for the task.
		2.4	Clean and appropriately store tools equipment and materials after use.
		2.5	Collect and carry out a range of tests on soil and growing media.
		2.6	Carry out the correct disposal of waste.
3	Be able to document, analyse and interpret horticultural information and apply understanding to a public garden context.	3.1	Document test evidence clearly and coherently.

		3.2	Analyse and interpret data collected.
		3.3	Document, record and communicate information clearly and coherently, using specialist vocabulary, when appropriate.
4	Understand the potential hazards and risks associated with horticultural operations in a public garden context.	4.1	Define risks associated with soils and growing media and the selected operation.
		4.2	Assess the hazards associated with soils and growing media and the selected operation.
		4.3	Promote environmental good practice.
		4.4	Work in a way which maintains health and safety and is consistent with current legislation, codes of practice and any additional requirements.