

Certificate in Native Plants and Ecological Horticulture

Our field-based Certificate in Native Plants & Ecological Horticulture is designed to instruct **experienced gardeners** and **landscape professionals** about northern New England's diverse flora and its uses in ecologically responsible horticulture.

This program guides committed gardeners through an ordered course of study, first covering the basic biology and ecology of native plants, then progressing toward advanced topics in green horticultural methods, plant selection, and design. Students who complete the required online, classroom, and hands-on coursework, elective classes, and field trips will earn a Certificate in Native Plants & Ecological Horticulture awarded by Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens. The certificate may be used as a marketable resume item or simply for enjoyment and personal growth.

Designed for seasoned gardeners from Maine and throughout northern New England, the Certificate in Native Plants & Ecological Horticulture is tailored to climate conditions, topography, soils, specific challenges, plants, and natural communities found right here in Maine. Students will learn from instructors who professionally landscape and garden in northern New England using native plants and environmentally sound techniques best suited to our climate. Students will gain a deeper understanding of the entire living system within an ecological garden and will build plant identification and land management techniques for various landscape settings.

Format and Goals

Small groups of students benefit from engaging online and hands-on courses covering plants and practices, including:

- The natural habitats of native plants and how they function and reproduce.
- How native plants, applied as garden plants, interact with their growing environment.
- How to select appropriate native plants for various site conditions.
- How to prepare and maintain gardens using sustainable methods such as composting using locally derived materials, integrated pest management, low water inputs, and minimal site alterations.
- How to incorporate ecological design principles into gardens and landscapes.



Course Requirements

The program consists of twelve required and three elective courses. Students may progress through the curriculum at their own pace. However, we recommend completion within three years to achieve a comprehensive study that can be effectively applied. A highly motivated student can complete the program in two growing seasons, yet for those who have a restrictive schedule, we request students participate in at least three courses per year. Instructors include a combination of Gardens' staff and guest experts with various specialties, such as botanists, horticulturists, ecologists, wildlife biologists, and soil scientists. Individual courses are typically 2–3 days held online, at the Gardens, and on some occasions further afield in midcoast Maine. For a complete listing of courses available this year or to register, visit mainegardens.org or call 207-633-8000.



Required Courses

To formally enroll, students must complete the annual 2-hour online *Orientation for the Certificate in Native Plants & Ecological Horticulture*. Other requirements are:

- *Soil Science for Gardeners*
- *Fundamentals of Botany*
- *Horticultural Ecology: Biological Interactions of Garden Plants and Environment*
- *Natural Communities of Maine*
- *Sustainable Horticultural Practices*
- *Integrated Pest and Disease Management*
- *Introduction to the Native Flora of Maine*
- *Selecting Native Herbaceous Plants*
- *Selecting Native Woody Plants*
- *Landscaping for Wildlife*
- *Invasive Plants: Issues, Identification and Ecology*
- *Ecological Landscape Design*

Elective Workshops and Trips

Elective class and field trip subjects cover pruning, plant identification and ecology, wetland ecology, garden design, pollinators and other wildlife, sustainable gardening, native plant propagation from seed, maritime, grassland, woodland and alpine ecology, and gardening in a changing climate. Students use the elective coursework to customize their focus, enabling the desired emphasis for personal or professional development (for example, plants for pollinators and meadowsapes).



Enrollment and Costs

To ensure a top-quality experience for participants, admission to the program is limited each year. Enrollment is on a first-come, first-served basis, starting with registration for the online class, *Orientation for Certificate in Native Plants and Ecological Horticulture*.

Curriculum Guidelines and Budget

- Prospective certificate students need to have a minimum of basic gardening experience or have attended introductory or beginner-level gardening classes before they attend these certificate courses. Our general education curriculum offers numerous beginner-level garden classes that start in late winter and run through late fall. They are offered online and in-person.
- The orientation class has a \$25 registration fee.
- You must participate in at least three classes per year to keep enrollment active.
- Enroll for a Certificate of Merit (without quizzes/exams) or Certificate of Completion (examination and helpful for professional portfolio).
- Students register and pay for individual courses and electives at their own pace.
- The 12 required courses range between 6–16 hours of class time and cost \$140–180 per course for members. We strongly recommend that students become members for a 20% class discount. Elective classes and field trips vary in price.
- Students with limited budgets can apply for financial assistance before registering for any certificate-required classes.

For more information or to enroll, please contact Irene Barber, Adult Education Program Manager, at ibarber@mainegardens.org.

