RHS Qualifications

RHS Level 2 Certificate in the Principles and Practices of Horticulture

Qualification Specification

From September 2026

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1. About this Qualification

1.1 Aims and objectives of the qualification

This qualification aims to develop learners' understanding of the fundamental scientific principles that underpin horticultural practice. Learners will gain essential knowledge of plants and their importance to the environment, society, health and wellbeing, together with the ability to identify a range of plants, pests, diseases, pathogens and disorders. The qualification recognises the vital role horticulturists play in creating and maintaining sustainable landscapes, growing plants and crops, enhancing biodiversity, and improving quality of life through the creation and management of healthy green spaces.

The qualification equips learners with the practical skills required to undertake routine horticultural tasks safely and effectively across a range of settings. Learners will develop competence in core horticultural activities, including planting, propagation, pruning, plant maintenance, turf establishment and management, and the maintenance of garden features. It provides the breadth of horticultural knowledge and skills required to support progression into employment within sectors such as professional gardening, landscaping, plant production and garden retail, while also supporting those already working within the industry to broaden and enhance their professional competence.

The qualification is designed to meet the needs of a diverse range of learners, including those entering the horticultural industry, changing careers, seeking professional development or pursuing horticulture as a personal interest. It enables learners to develop transferable skills such as problem solving, communication, planning and the implementation of management programmes through applied learning. The qualification also supports progression to further study at Level 3 and beyond, providing a foundation for higher-level technical learning, career advancement and entry into more specialised roles within the horticultural sector.

1.2 Entry requirements

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

1.3 Guided Learning Hours (GLH) and Total Qualification Time (TQT)

The Guided Learning Hours (GLH) represent the time that the learner spends learning under the immediate guidance and supervision of a tutor. Guided Learning Hours are always less than total qualification time, as learners are expected to complete a certain amount of study in their own time. The Guided Learning Hours for this qualification is 240.

Total Qualification Time (TQT) includes the Guided Learning Hours and represents the notional time that an average learner could reasonably expect to take to complete the learning outcomes of the units to the standard determined by the assessment criteria and gain the qualification. It includes all face-to-face contact with tutors as well as assessment time and unsupervised directed study, coursework and practice. The Total Qualification Time for this qualification is 360.

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1.4 Qualification Structure

The RHS Level 2 Certificate in the Principles and Practices of Horticulture is made up of achieving the following 2 qualifications.

Qualification	Equivalent Qualification	QAN
RHS Level 2 Certificate in the Principles and Practices of Horticulture	RHS Level 2 Certificate in the Principles of Plant Growth and Development	**610/1042/X**
	RHS Level 2 Certificate in Practical Horticulture	**610/0486/8**

1.5 Grading

Each qualification must be passed for the award of the Certificate. The weighting of each qualification is as follows:

RHS Level 2 Certificate in the Principles of Plant Growth and Development	**Exam 1 (units 1-4) – 25%**
RHS Level 2 Certificate in the Principles of Plant Growth and Development	**Exam 2 (units 5-8) – 25%**
RHS Level 2 Certificate in Practical Horticulture	**50%**

Learners must achieve a minimum of 50% of the marks available for each exam in order to be awarded the qualification.

A final grade for the overall qualification will be calculated by amalgamating the marks for each exam and expressed as a percentage. Learners will be awarded the following grades for the complete qualification:

50-64.9% Pass
65-79.9% Merit
80%+ Distinction

1.6 Learning Resources

There is a wide range of books, online material 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 learning resources will best support their studies, or to choose the most appropriate resources to support the qualification requirements and their needs from the wealth of material available.

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1.7 Approved Centres

RHS Qualifications can only be delivered by approved centres. Further information regarding the approval process can be found at: rhs.org.uk/qualifications.

1.8 Learner Registration

All learners must be registered with RHS Qualifications at the commencement of this qualification through the RHS Qualifications portal. More information about the registration process is available from RHS Qualifications.

1.9 Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration

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

Special consideration is given following the examination to learners 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 documents 'Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments Policy for Approved Centres' and 'Special Consideration Policy for Approved Centres'. These documents are available on the RHS website (rhs.org.uk/qualifications), the RHS Qualifications 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 learner. Application must be made within specified timescales.

1.10 Fees

For a full list of fees please see the RHS Qualifications Fees Notice. This document is available on the Qualifications page on the RHS website and on the RHS Qualifications portal. All fees are payable prior to confirmation of entry for any examination.

1.11 Late Entries

RHS Qualifications publishes annually, and distributes to Approved Providers, the closing dates of entry for each examination for the following year. **Late entries will not be accepted.**

1.12 Enquiry about Results service

An enquiry about results service is available from RHS Qualifications. Further information about this service is available on our website at rhs.org.uk/qualifications

1.13 Appeals

The appeals procedure is available on the RHS Qualifications portal and on the RHS website rhs.org.uk/qualifications)

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1.14 Replacement Certificate (if lost, damaged or destroyed)

The fee for a replacement certificate can be found on the RHS Qualifications Fees Notice. Requests for a replacement certificate must be sent to the Qualifications Department.

1.15 Malpractice and Maladministration

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 learners or centres where incidents, or attempted incidents, of malpractice have been proven.

A copy of the full policy is available on the RHS Qualifications portal and on the RHS website rhs.org.uk/qualifications

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2: Units included in the qualification

2.1 RHS Level 2 Certificate in the Principles of Plant Growth and Development

Exam 1		
Unit		**Learning outcomes**
1	**Plant Science 1:** provides underpinning knowledge of the plant, its structure and function.	1. Understand scientific and common plant names 2. Understand life cycle adaptations 3. Understand external parts of the plant 4. Understand internal plant structures 5. Understand pollination and fertilisation 6. Understand photosynthesis and respiration 7. Understand movement of water through the plant
2	**Plant Health:** provides underpinning knowledge and understanding of the effect of a range of factors on plant health.	1. Understand environmental conditions 2. Understand plant nutrition and plant health 3. Understand the impact of competition on plant health 4. Understand pests and pathogens 5. Understand biosecurity and plant passports 6. Understand how to maintain plant health
3	**Plant Nutrition**: provides horticultural knowledge of plant nutrition and growing media.	1. Understand soil types and profiles 2. Understand the role of nutrients 3. Understand soil-based nutrition 4. Understand the principles of pH and nutrient availability 5. Understand bulk constituents for growing media
4	**Plant Specification:** provides horticultural knowledge to make recommendations for planting based on matching plant need and site requirements.	1. Understand site-based criteria 2. Understand plant-based criteria 3. Understand plant specifications 4. Understand processes for receiving plant material on site 5. Understand planting and post-planting care 6. Understand how to maintain new plantings

Exam 2		
Unit		**Learning outcomes**
5	**Plant Science II:** provides an understanding of the range and role of plant adaptations.	1. Understand leaf adaptations 2. Understand stem adaptations 3. Understand root adaptations 4. Understand flower adaptations 5. Understand seed adaptations 6. Understand growth habit adaptations
6	**Planting Styles:** provides horticultural knowledge of the factors involved in creating a wide range of different horticultural plantings.	1. Understand historical contexts 2. Understand formal planting 3. Understand informal planting 4. Understand plant associations 5. Understand plant uses 6. Understand edible landscapes 7. Understand short-term plantings
7	**Horticulture and Society:** allows learners to develop their knowledge and understanding of horticulture's contribution to society, including social, environmental and economic.	1. Understanding wellbeing 2. Understanding environment 3. Understand the impact of horticulture on the UK economy 4. Understand community horticulture
8	**Biodiversity:** provides an applied knowledge of the roles of plants in creating habitats to encourage biodiversity.	1. Understanding plants and biodiversity 2. Understand the impact of climate change 3. Understand habitat creation 4. Understand citizen science and species surveys 5. Understand biodiversity polices and legislation

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2.2 RHS Level 2 Certificate in Practical Horticulture

Unit		Learning outcomes
1	**Plant Identification:** provides the skills and knowledge to enable learners to identify a wide range of plants.	1. Be able to identify and select plants
2	**Plant Establishment:** provides learners with the skills involved in the establishment of plants in containers and the open ground.	1. Be able to assess a site 2. Be able to prepare a site for planting 3. Be able to position plants prior to planting 4. Be able to sow seeds in the open ground 5. Be able to establish new hedge plantings 6. Be able to plant containers 7. Be able to plant and stake trees 8. Be able to create and interpret plant labels
3	**Plant Propagation:** provides learners with the skills and underpinning knowledge to propagate plants professionally.	1. Be able to assess environmental conditions 2. Be able to select propagation equipment 3. Be able to select growing media 4. Be able to propagate plants by seed in containers 5. Be able to propagate plants by vegetative means 6. Be able to select equipment for propagation.
4	**Plant Health:** provides the skills to be able to identify and prevent a range of threats to plant health.	1. Understand plant health 2. Be able to assess nutritional deficiencies 3. Be able to identify and monitor pests, pathogens and diseases 4. Be able to implement IPM/Garden Health Plans.
5	**Plant Care:** equips learners with the skills and knowledge to be able to implement garden maintenance plans.	1. Be able to follow maintenance plans 2. Be able to manage water use 3. Be able to apply fertiliser 4. Be able to stake and support plants 5. Be able to promote plant health 6. Be able to apply mulches 7. Be able to control weeds 8. Be able to pot off and pot on plants 9. Be able to manage green waste
6	**Plant Pruning:** equips learners with the horticultural skills and knowledge to be able to prune a range of plants.	1. Be able to carry out pruning 2. Be able to prune hedges 3. Be able to maintain pruning tools and hedge trimmers.
7	**Garden Features**: provides learners with the skills and underpinning knowledge to be able care for and maintain a wide range of garden features.	1. Be able to maintain garden features 2. Be able to maintain timber elements 3. Be able to maintain paved and hard surfaces 4. Be able to maintain plant supports 5. Be able to maintain ponds.
8	**Grassed Areas:** provides learners with the skills required to establish and maintain grassed areas in private and public garden settings.	1. Be able to identify turf species and seed mixes for different purposes 2. Be able to establish grassed areas 3. Be able to mow grassed areas 4. Be able to carry out scarifying and aerating activities 5. Be able to control lawn weeds 6. Be able to maintain turf health 7. Be able to repair turf.

The learning outcomes, assessment criteria and qualification-specific requirements for each component qualification are detailed within the relevant qualification specifications. Centres should refer to these documents when delivering and assessing the diploma programme.

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3. Assessment methods

3.1 RHS Level 2 Certificate in the Principles of Plant Growth and Development

This qualification will be entirely assessed by two externally set and marked examinations:

- The first examination covers Units 1-4
- The second examination covers Units 5-8

In each examination, questions will be drawn from content across Learning Outcomes within each unit. All Learning Outcomes/Assessment Criteria will be covered across three examination series.

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

3.2 RHS Level 2 Certificate in Practical Horticulture

This qualification will be assessed through two main methodologies:

- Two externally set practical assessment days – each consist of:
    - Plant Identification Assessment, candidates are required to accurately identify 10 plant specimens.
    - Three practical tasks, designed to assess a range of horticultural skills relevant to the qualification.
- One externally set and marked online assessment covering underpinning knowledge from across the specification.

Further details on the assessments for these qualifications can be found in the relevant qualification specification.

All assessments must be conducted in accordance with the RHS requirements.

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4. Version History

Version	Date	Description of change
10	16/09/2026	Clarification to the presentation of grade boundary percentages.

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