



the gardens  
at HCP  
Horticulture Centre of the Pacific



Victoria Master Gardener Association  
*We Grow Gardeners*

# MASTER GARDENER

## 2026 TRAINING

## PROGRAM HANDBOOK

## PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

This guide was created as a resource for participants taking the Master Gardener Training Program at the Gardens at HCP. It is a reference to find information that is relevant to you as you progress through the program.

This guide will also help participants to understand both the intentions of the program and the expectations of you as a participant. We hope it is helpful to you as you learn and grow!

## TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This acknowledgement was created for the HCP in collaboration with the W̱SÁNEĆ people.

*"We at HCP gratefully acknowledge that we occupy unceded territory of the W̱SÁNEĆ and Lək'wəŋən peoples. We recognize these lands and ecosystems are not our own. We recognize our role in the continuing process of dispossession, colonialism, and reconciliation. We recognize the need to do better. We humbly welcome all to join in this learning journey."*

## ABOUT THE PROGRAM

### WHO THIS PROGRAM IS INTENDED FOR

At this stage, you have made the decision to take the program and hopefully you have an idea of why you have joined the class. Please read below to be sure that the program is the right fit for you and let us know if you have any questions.

This program is offered in partnership with the Victoria Master Gardener Association (VMGA). Successful completion of the program is a prerequisite for joining the VMGA. However, not everyone who takes the program intends to join the VMGA: some take it for their own interest.

Participants who take the program have a diverse range of backgrounds and gardening experience. What they do have in common is a desire to learn about gardening, in particular for our local climate. Note that this program is at the beginner level, so ideal for novices, home gardeners and hobbyists interested in gaining a well-rounded understanding of gardening basics.

## THIS PROGRAM IS NOT INTENDED FOR ...

This program is not intended for those who are interested in career training in horticulture. If you are interested in becoming a landscape gardener, we recommend you take the Landscape Horticulture Certificate Program or Apprenticeship Programs with the Pacific Horticulture College at the Gardens. To learn more about these programs, please visit this website - [Pacific Horticulture College](#)

This program is at an introductory level and may not have value for gardening experts or landscape professionals unless they are taking it to meet the prerequisite to join the Victoria Master Gardener Association.

This program focuses on ornamental gardening with two classes on food production. If your main interest is learning about growing food, the HCP offers community education classes and courses throughout the year, including the annual [Backyard Farmer](#) program. Visit the HCP website for details.

## LOCATION

In-person classes are held at the Gardens at HCP (Horticulture Centre of the Pacific), 505 Quayle Road, Saanich, BC. The HCP is a not-for-profit organization that is home to the Pacific Horticulture College as well as a public garden lovingly cared for by volunteers, staff, and students.

## FACILITIES

In-person classes will be held in the classroom at the Gardens at HCP - 505 Quayle Road in Saanich. The Classroom is the small building to the far left hand side of the parking lot as you drive in.

The classroom can accommodate 24 participants. Each participant will share a 6ft table with one other participant. There is a washroom nearby. The classroom is equipped with a water cooler, kettle, microwave and refrigerator. Please bring your own mug if you would like to make tea.

If you are a wheelchair user and require additional information about the accessibility of the facilities or would like to bring a helper to class, please contact the community education coordinator directly for more information - [communityed@hcp.ca](mailto:communityed@hcp.ca)

Field trips and practical classes may be held at different locations and participants will receive this information from their instructor ahead of time.

## FORMAT AND DELIVERY

This program has a blended delivery and will be partially in person and partially online. In person classes will be held in the classroom at the Gardens. There will also be field trips and hands-on classes. Please consult the detailed class schedule so you know what to expect and are prepared. Participants will be walking or seated for the majority of the program. Please connect with the community education coordinator if you are a person with a disability that would impact your ability to participate.

Online classes will be via Zoom. Participants should be comfortable attending a zoom meeting and have a computer and wifi that meets the requirements. If you cannot make a zoom class during the live session, there may be a recording of the session available for a limited time.

Communication between instructors, participants and staff happens largely via email. Participants should be comfortable using email and be willing to check email regularly to receive program updates, including last minute in-person cancellations/move of classes to Zoom due to winter weather (Quayle Road is not plowed/accessible during heavy snow events.)

## SCHEDULE

This program is composed of 26 3-hour sessions and runs on Sunday mornings 9am - 12pm and Thursday evenings 6pm - 9pm between January 25 and May 7, 2026. On three occasions, the class will meet online on Tuesday evenings - a recording will be available for viewing (for a limited period) if you can't make it. A detailed schedule is shared below under the Resources heading. Please consult the schedule ahead of classes to determine if it will be in person, online or a field trip. Topics/instructors in the schedule are subject to change with advance notice.

Additional dates are held in case of inclement weather for practicums and field trips. If there are no rescheduled classes, then the program end/exam date may be adjusted.

If an instructor is not able to teach a class due to unforeseen circumstances, we will contact you as soon as possible to let you know. Our goal is to let you know the night before, but circumstances may not always make this possible. Please check your email for updates.

## ZOOM LINKS FOR CLASSES

Community Ed will provide links to Zoom classes by email reminders in advance. On some occasions, we will be joining groups of Master Gardener Trainees from other chapters in BC.

## INSTRUCTORS & STAFF

The program has a lead instructor and four guest instructors. Contact information for your instructors can be found under the “Resources” section of this guide.



### **Lead Instructor - Jane Tice - Plant Identification / Pruning**

After what seemed like more than one lifetime spent working indoors in retail management, Jane woke up one day and said, enough. Her first garden had awakened an interest and as she came from a long line of gardeners, thought it really must be bred in the bone. Her sister Susan had already made the transition to horticulture from the hospitality industry and never looked back. Jane enrolled in the full-time program here at the Pacific Horticulture College, and at graduation began working as a maintenance gardener for private clients. She began to teach the Plant Identification class for the college in 2012 and Practical Skills in 2018. She attained her Red Seal in Landscape Horticulture in 2020. Jane has met many ardent gardeners over the years and they would say that gardening is a life long learning experience and she couldn't agree more. There is always something new; a discovery in the science of soil, the idea that trees communicate with each other, new plants to learn and these days, how to adapt gardens in a changing climate.



### **Guest Instructor - Linda Gilkeson - Food Production / Pests & Diseases**

Linda is an entomologist and local gardening celebrity, speaker and author. Many rely on her well-known newsletter which is a fantastic resource for growing food. Her comprehensive gardening book, *Backyard Bounty: The Complete Guide to year-Round Organic Gardening in the Pacific Northwest*, became a BC bestseller. Linda created and instructed the Year Round Harvest program for 12 years.  
(Please note: Linda's classes are taught on Zoom)



### **Guest Instructor - Laura Biggs - Soils / Botany**

Laura Biggs has been instructing post-secondary Biology courses since 2005 at the Pacific Horticulture College and Camosun. She has also been the Pacific Horticulture College Director.





### **Guest Instructor - Linda Petite - Propagation**

Linda Petite has been the Head Gardener at the Gardens at HCP since 2010. Prior to that she worked in a Garden Center/Landscape company for 25 years in Antigonish, NS before heading west. Linda is a Pacific Horticulture College instructor and also teaches community education classes at the Gardens. Areas of interest include growing veggies, cactus and succulents, propagation, hydrangeas, and wreath making.



### **Guest Instructor - Bethany Couture - Design**

Bethany Couture is a holistic horticulturalist from Victoria BC. Through her studies, she realized there must be more sustainable ways to cultivate sustenance from the land, which led her down the path of permaculture and wove together her passions for horticulture, herbalism, mycology, self-sufficiency and environmental sustainability. She is the lead steward of the permaculture garden at the HCP and is the permaculture instructor at the PHC. She also runs her own horticulture business, Garden Alchemist, which designs landscapes abundant with edible, medicinal, and native plants.



### **HCP Community Education Coordinator - Janet Munsil**

Janet completed Master Gardener Training in 2024 and now works in Community Ed at the HCP following a long career as a theatre producer, director, and playwright. When not programming courses for the HCP, she learns about nature, teaches writing at UVIC, and is a licensed River Thames Mudlark.

## **PROGRAM COMPLETION REQUIREMENTS**

There are completion requirements for those participants who wish to join the VMGA. If you are not intending to join the VMGA, then you do not need to meet the requirements below..

However, we do encourage you to complete the assignments for your own learning enrichment and to attend as many classes as you can to gain the full value of the program.

Requirements to complete the program:

- Attendance 80% (miss a maximum of 5 classes)
- Assignments (complete all assignments and achieve a minimum of 80%)
- Final open book exam (minimum grade of 80%)

Participants who successfully complete the program will receive a graduation certificate.

## Attendance

If you are unable to attend an in-person class, please email the instructor directly to let them know. Note that attendance of 80% is required to successfully complete the program. Please do not attend if you are contagious or have tested positive for Covid 19.

Zoom classes should be attended at the time they are scheduled. However, if you cannot attend, please watch the recording prior to the following class. Recordings are typically shared the day after the class is scheduled and are available for 2 weeks.

If you have extenuating circumstances that impact your attendance, please get in touch with us so we can support you to complete the program.

## Assignments

There are 4 homework assignments for the program and participants can expect to spend between 10 - 15 hours completing them. Do not exceed the page count required. Deadlines will be noted on the class schedule.

Assignments can be emailed to the instructor in MS Word or a legible, typed or hand-written hard copy can be given to the instructor in person.

## Exam

The exam will be an open book, multiple choice exam with approximately 80 questions. Participants have up to 3 hours to complete the exam.

The questions will be from the WSU Pacific Northwest Master Gardener Handbook (revised June 2025). If a participant does not score the required 80% pass rate, an opportunity will be provided to re-write the exam.

The exam will be scheduled for the end of the program and participants who are not able to attend the set date will be given an alternate date on which to do their exam.

## PROGRAM TEXTS & HANDOUTS

There are two textbooks for this course, one digital (available as a pdf), and one hard copy which participants will receive on their first day of class. These are:

*2025 WSU Pacific Northwest Gardener Handbook – Growing for the Future*  
(online, download)

*Natural Insect, Weed & Disease Control* by Linda Gilkeson (hard copy provided)

Participants may also receive handouts from instructors in printed or electronic format, depending on the instructor preference. Please note that powerpoints will not be shared with participants, so please be sure to take notes during class.

We've asked our instructors to recommend some additional resources and books you may be interested in, and their picks are at the end of this handbook. Many of these are available at the HCP Library which you will visit as part of your introductory tour of the gardens. HCP Members may borrow books.

## MEMBERSHIPS

### THE VICTORIA MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION (VMGA)

#### **What is a Master Gardener and what does a Master Gardener do?**

VGMA is a service club, whose members combine a passion for gardening and a dedication to share their knowledge with the community. As part of an international, not-for-profit organization, all Master Gardeners are volunteers and offer their knowledge in many venues. They also commit to ongoing personal education.

#### **How to become a Certified Master Gardener**

After successful completion of the Master Gardener Training Program, participants can join the VMGA as an Intern Master Gardener. To become a qualified Master Gardener, interns must complete a minimum of 50 volunteer hours in 24 months, 20 of which must be providing gardening advice in some form. These Outreach Hours include clinics, Virtual Gardener Mentoring, Ask a Master Gardener, social media content creation, writing Clinic Reference Materials, and/or other projects designed to build confidence and knowledge in providing gardening advice. VMGA has a variety of processes to assure interns of the support of a Qualified Master Gardener. Other volunteer hours (Supplementary Hours) include service projects in the community and organizational service and support. Volunteer hours are the cornerstone of certification. Once certification has been obtained, the minimum number of volunteer hours per year is reduced. In addition to volunteer hours, members attend regular meetings and commit to participation in ongoing education.



## HCP MEMBERSHIP TO THE GARDENS

All Master Gardener participants receive an annual membership to the HCP at the first session. If you already have a membership, it will be extended for 12 months. Please remember this if you are planning to renew or take out a new membership any time soon as you may prefer to wait until your free membership is available. Membership benefits include free admission to the Gardens, 10% discount on plant sales and the HCP gift shop, reduced fees for many community education classes and more. To read the full list of membership benefits, please visit <https://hcp.ca/membership/garden-membership/>

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Please note, instructors and administration staff work part time and may take a few days to respond. If you have an urgent enquiry that cannot wait, please contact the main office who will try to reach the community education coordinator. Please keep in mind that instructor contact information is confidential. Please do not share personal email addresses outside of the class.

### **HCP Main Office**

Hours: every day, 9am – 4pm

250 479 6162 (please leave a message if it goes to voicemail)

Reception@hcp.ca

### **Community Education Coordinator**

Janet Munsil

Hours: Wednesday to Friday, 8:30 am - 4:30 pm (may vary)

250 479 6273

communityed@hcp.ca or janet@hcp.ca

### **Library**

library@hcp.ca

Online Catalogue - <https://www.librarycat.org/lib/H.C.P.>

Hours: Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays 10am to 1pm.

**Lead Instructor**

Jane Tice / ejane.tice@gmail.com

**Food Production/Plant Pests & Diseases**

Linda Gilkeson /gilkeson@shaw.ca

**Soils & Botany Instructor**

Laura Biggs / college@hcp.ca

**Propagation Instructor**

Linda Petite / headgardener@hcp.ca

**Design Instructor**

Heidi Hitchcock/heidi@horticultura.ca

## SUGGESTED READING AND RESOURCES

**Recommended by Jane Tice****Books**

*The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Trees* David Moore & John White ISBN 978-0-691-15823-5

*Random House Book of Shrubs* Roger Phillips & Martyn Rix ISBN 0-679-72345-5

*Encyclopedia of Trees & Shrubs* Michael Dirr ISBN 978-0-88192-901-0 (anything by Dirr!)

*Plants of Coastal British Columbia* Pojar & Mackinnon ISBN 1-55105-042-0

*A-Z Encyclopedia of Garden Plants* ISBN 978-1-5536-3041-8

**Websites**

University and College sites- especially if in the PNW

RHS Royal Horticultural Society – Wisley in Sussex, England

Botanical Gardens including Kew

[Plantlust.com](http://Plantlust.com)

Fine Gardening but watch for lots of info that doesn't apply to Victoria especially with pests and diseases

[Gardenersworld.com](http://Gardenersworld.com) - from the U.K.

<https://powo.science.kew.org> World Plant List- useful for the final word on plant names

Kwantlan College- <https://plantdatabase.kpu.ca/>

really good for plant identification points

Great Plant Picks Elizabeth C. Miller Botanical Garden

**For Native Plants**

linnet.geog.ubc.ca- native plants

portlandnursery.com/plants/natives

www.nwplants.com

www.hat.bc.ca

### **Recommended by Linda Gilkeson**

#### **Books**

Douglas Tallamy. *Nature's Best Hope*.

An essential guide to choosing landscape plants and rethinking what the ecology of our yards should be.

<https://homegrownnationalpark.org/tallamys-hub>

Merrill A. Peterson. *Pacific Northwest Insects*. 2018.

Hands down the best books for ID of Pacific Northwest insects of all kinds. Doesn't contain control info, but has life cycle and distribution notes; it is now my main go-to guide for identification.

Linda Gilkeson. *Backyard Bounty*

### **Recommended by Laura Biggs**

#### **Books**

Brian Capon. *Botany for Gardeners*

Niall Dunne. *Healthy Soils for Sustainable Gardens*

(not being printed anymore and might be hard to find)

#### **Websites**

<http://soilquality.org/>

Compost Education Centre Factsheets: <https://compost.bc.ca/programsresources/factsheets/>

<https://extension.colostate.edu/topic-areas/yard-garden/?target=publications>

"The Private Life of Plants" videos by David Attenborough

(For Botany. Participants will need to look this up to find a copy)