



The North Carolina Arboretum is proud to offer the BLUE RIDGE NATURALIST CERTIFICATE OF MERIT program that presents learning opportunities on a variety of topics in Natural History, Ecology and Culture.

These courses provide ways to learn online and in the field more about the uniqueness of this place in the Southern Appalachian ecosystem, one of the most diverse regions in the temperate world.

Any adult over 18 may take classes through the Arboretum’s Adult Education Programs. For those interested in developing their skills and knowledge as naturalists, however, we offer a Certificate of Merit requiring core courses such as botany and regional plant identification, geology, ecology and zoology among others as well as elective classes on a range of topics.

Overview of BRN Program

Prospective students must complete an application for admission to the program. (See **How to Apply** below.)

Students in the **Blue Ridge Naturalist Certificate of Merit** program will complete core lecture and field studies as well as elective studies in designated subject areas. A 30-50 hour final project is required for graduation. The curriculum can be completed within two years, dependent on class schedule and instructor availability. Some students might need a longer time to complete the course of study and the final project. Many classes are offered online during this time with some small-group field experiences designed for safely learning onsite at the Arboretum and locations in the region as determined with the instructor.

- **Students should print out and keep track of their course of study for the Naturalist Certificate of Merit. We recommend students record the date and number of hours for all courses taken for credit.**
- **Students subscribe to a Code of Honor and Community Values regarding attendance and participation.**
- **For both online and onsite/field experiences, students are encouraged to participate in creating a collaborative, interactive and experiential learning environment. For online courses: Please try to show up as more than a black rectangle for our instructors as often as possible. Your presence matters a great deal.**
- **Credit is granted for each core requirement and category of elective studies upon the completion of the reflection assignments on Schoology.**

Core Studies - Projected Calendar 2022		
February - March 2022	Zoology of the Blue Ridge, Parts I & II	Registration Closed (Online Available On Demand)
March - April 2022	Botany Basics	Registration Opens February 2022
June 2022	Water (Fluvial) Systems	Registration Opens May 2022
August 2022	Geology of the Blue Ridge	Registration Opens May 2022
September 2022	Ecology of the Blue Ridge	Registration Opens July 2022
October 2022	Natural History Interpretation	Registration Opens July 2022 Note: By permission of program coordinator for students at Final Project Stage
2022 Dates TBD	Climate Change Science	Schedule TBD
Native Tree Identification – Online Course Fulfills Requirement; Elective Field Experiences Recommended (See Below)		
February 2022	Winter Native Tree ID	Registration Closed (Online Available On Demand)
April 2022	Spring Native Tree ID	Registration Opens April 2022
July 2022	Summer Native Tree ID	Registration Opens May 2022
October 2022	Fall Color and Native Tree ID	Registration Opens July 2022
Flora of the Blue Ridge Identification – Available in Online and Field Versions		
April - May 2022	Spring Flora	Registration Opens February 2022
June - July 2022	Summer Flora	Registration Opens May 2022
August - September 2022	Fall Flora	Registration Opens July 2022

Elective Studies

Choose From Each Category Elective studies are selected from the following categories: Astronomy & Meteorology; Wildlife; Plant Studies; Appalachian Arts & Culture; Growing in Place & Special Topics; Service & Volunteerism.

Students should elect to take at least six hours from each category above and then may opt to take classes in any subject area as desired. Classes that satisfy elective credits are identified by category within each course description.

How to Apply

Complete an application online: <http://www.ncarboretum.org/education-programs/certifications/>
A one-time, non-refundable \$75 application fee is required.

For More Information

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