



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. While the curriculum can be completed within two years, students may take as long as they need to complete course requirements and the final project. Classes are offered online, onsite at the Arboretum, and in the field and are led by expert instructors.	
2023 Course Schedule	
Core Lecture Courses – Online Course Fulfills Requirement; 4 Required Supplemental Field Experiences	
February - March 2023	Zoology of the Blue Ridge, Parts I & II
March - April 2023	Botany Basics
May - June 2023	Water (Fluvial) Systems
August 2023	Geology of the Blue Ridge
September - October 2023	Ecology of the Blue Ridge
October 2023	Climate Change Science
November 2023	Natural History Interpretation
In Season 2023	Native Tree Identification (Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall)
In Season 2023	Flora Identification (Spring, Summer, Fall)
Field Experiences and Elective Studies	
Elective Studies: BRN Students should select electives from the following categories:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 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 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.	
Field Experiences: BRN Students should consider taking as many field experiences as possible for their Naturalist study. A minimum of four (4) field studies fulfill program requirements. Program field experiences include:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In Season Tree Identification Field Experiences (Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall) ● In Season Flora Identification Field Experiences (Spring, Summer, Fall) ● Botany Basics Field Experience ● Fluvial Systems Field Experience ● Geology of the Blue Ridge Field Experience ● Ecology of the Blue Ridge Field Experience 	
Apply to the Program	
Complete an application online: https://www.ncarboretum.org/education-programs/certifications/	
A one-time, non-refundable application fee of \$150 is required at time of enrollment. Applicants are admitted during open enrollment periods in December – January and August – September.	
For More Information	Program Coordinator Rebecca Caldwell Email: adulthoodeducation@ncarboretum.org