



Adult & Continuing Education Programs Certificate of Merit Program FAQs



North Carolina Arboretum Society members receive a 10% discount on class registration fees. [Become an Arboretum Member!](#)

Q: How do I apply to either certificate program?

A: Open enrollment happens twice a year from mid December - January, and again from mid June - July. An initial application and administrative fee is required, which covers student support, access to online learning management systems, and graduation costs. The one-time application fee is not discounted for members.

Q: What is the total cost of the program?

A: There is no set total cost of either Certificate of Merit Program. Once enrolled, students pay per class as they go. Registration fees range from \$35 for a one-session online course to \$265 for a multi-session field course. Registration fees go toward paying our instructors while the remaining funds go to staff the program and maintain record keeping.

Q: How long does it typically take to complete the program? Is there a timeframe in which the program must be completed?

A: Most students are able to complete the Blue Ridge Eco-Gardener (BREG) program in one to two years, and the Blue Ridge Naturalist (BRN) in two to three years. There is no deadline at which those enrolled must complete their required credit hours and final projects.

Q: What are the required courses? Where do I find the courses described?

A: Our certificate programs are self-directed, and core and elective courses offered year round. As a first resource, consult [our certificate programs](#) webpage, including a Curriculum Overview for each program. The Curriculum Overview details which core classes are required as well as the number of elective courses necessary for each certification. Many core courses are only offered once a year, or only in the appropriate season, such as *Spring Plants of Interest* or *Winter Native Tree Identification*. New courses are listed as available on the main [Adult Education website](#) and announced in our *Learn & Grow* e-newsletter.

Q. What are the dates, times and the location of classes?

A: All dates, times and locations of all classes are listed in the course descriptions. Class locations are indicated by ONLINE, ONSITE or FIELD just before the date. If applicable, our course listings include the eligibility category (Core or Elective) for our Blue Ridge Naturalist (BRN) & Blue Ridge EcoGardener (BREG) programs.

For example: **ONSITE | Saturday, February 10 – 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.**

Instructor: John Doe

\$45 Non-member Adult**

BRN - Core, 2 hours | BREG - Elective, 2 hours

Capacity: 12

Q: I'm a current member of the Arboretum. How do I redeem my 10% discount towards classes?

A: Before you begin your registration, make sure that you are signed into your account. If you are signed in correctly and still encounter errors, please go ahead and register. Email us at adulthoodeducation@ncarboretum.org and the discount will be refunded to your account within 3 to 5 days.

Q: I'm not sure I want to commit to a certificate program yet. Do classes I take now count toward a future certification?

A: Yes, students who begin taking classes and later decide to enroll in a certificate program can count any class taken within one year prior to enrollment as a certificate of merit student.

Q: Are there any opportunities for scholarships?

A: If the cost of a class is a financial hardship for you, please submit our [Scholarship Application](#), and we will be in contact to follow up.

Q: Are there required/recommended texts?

- Recommended for the Blue Ridge Naturalist program:
 - ***The Nature of Oaks: The Rich Ecology of Our Most Essential Native Trees.***
Tallamy, Douglas W. (2021, Timber Press)

- Recommended for the Blue Ridge EcoGardener program:
 - ***Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation That Starts in Your Yard.***
Tallamy, Douglas W. (2020, Timber Press)

- ***Planting in a Post Wild World: Designing Plant Communities for Resilient Landscapes.*** Rainer, Thomas and Claudia West (2015, Timber Press)

Additional recommended texts are listed on the Curriculum Overview for each Certificate of Merit program.