



## Ecological Horticulture Certificate Program

### Personal Project Guide and Requirements Checklist

Use this checklist to guide you through the successful completion of your Capstone Project. The capstone is the final step in the Certificate Program and is designed to help you synthesize coursework and apply ecological horticulture principles to a topic of personal interest.

#### Eligibility & Planning

- All required and elective Ecological Horticulture coursework has been completed
- Registration for 'Capstone Project' completed on the Morris website.  
Project Proposal Form submitted and approved before beginning project work
- Project timeline reviewed (4–6 weeks after registration, unless extension is granted)

#### Project Focus & Proposal

- Selected a clear project focus aligned with ecological horticulture principles and Certificate Program coursework. Examples include but are not limited to:
  - Stormwater management-focused garden design
  - Native plant propagation
  - Soil health strategies
  - Community greening initiatives
  - Habitat restoration
- Submitted a Proposal Form that includes:
  - Project topic, project goals, planned approach (as outlined below)



## Project Development

- Dedicated approximately **8–10 hours** to project work
- Engaged in *at least one* of the following approaches:
  - Research and literature review
  - Hands-on experimentation or installation
  - Design or planning work
  - Site-based observation or analysis
- Applied ecological principles learned throughout the Certificate Program

## Documentation & Reflection

- Documented the project process (notes, images, sketches, data, or other materials)
- Identified and demonstrated key learnings and insights
- Reflected on how ecological horticulture principles informed decisions and outcomes

## Final Presentation (via Zoom recording)

- Prepared a **short, recorded Zoom presentation** that conveys an understanding of and ability to apply ecological horticulture concepts, by including:
  - Project overview and focus
  - Methods, design choices, or approach
  - Results and findings, as related to proposed outcomes
  - Key insights and reflections
- Recorded the presentation on Zoom (at least 10 minutes suggested but not longer than 30 minutes)
- Submitted the recording by the required deadline
- (Optional but encouraged) Agreed to share the recording with fellow certificate students



## Submission & Review

- Presentation submitted within **4–6 weeks** of registration (or approved extended timeframe)
- All materials uploaded according to program instructions
- Awaiting asynchronous review and feedback from certificate staff and instructors

## Questions or Support?

- Contact: [education@morrisarboretum.org](mailto:education@morrisarboretum.org) and/or [sbruneau@upenn.edu](mailto:sbruneau@upenn.edu)



## Ecological Horticulture Certificate

### Personal Project Student Rubric

Your capstone project is a chance to bring together what you've learned and apply it to a topic that matters to you. Projects are reviewed as a whole, but assessment is broken down into 6 components with the goal of assessing your learning in each area and supporting your growth. Project evaluation will apply the following criteria for assessment:

#### Performance Levels

- **Exemplary:** You went above and beyond, exceeding expectations
- **Expected:** You completed what was required, meeting expectations
- **Emergent:** You show potential, but some parts need more work
- **Unsatisfactory:** Required pieces are missing

#### Final Outcome

To successfully complete the capstone, your project should meet expectations in all six required components. You will have the opportunity to revise and resubmit the components of the project that fall short of this threshold.

A ***Certificate of Distinction*** will be awarded when a project has been deemed Exemplary in at least 4 of the 6 required components. This designation indicates your capstone project mirrors the performance of an accomplished practitioner of ecological horticulture.

Questions or support: [education@morrisarboretum.org](mailto:education@morrisarboretum.org)



## Capstone Project Scoring Components

### 1. Project Topic & Proposal

What reviewers look for:

- A clear project idea connected to ecological horticulture
- Proposal submitted and approved before starting

Level	Description
Exemplary	Project topic is clear, meaningful, and strongly connected to Certificate Program course topics and concepts
Expected	Project topic is clear and connected to ecological horticulture
Emergent	Project topic is somewhat unclear or connection is weak
Unsatisfactory	Topic was not approved or proposal was not submitted

### 2. Using Ecological Horticulture Principles

What reviewers look for:

- How you applied what you learned in the program
- How ecological thinking guided your choices

Level	Description
Exemplary	Clearly and thoughtfully uses several ecological concepts
Expected	Uses ecological concepts in appropriate ways
Emergent	Limited or unclear use of ecological concepts
Unsatisfactory	Ecological concepts are not evident



### 3. Project Work & Effort

**What reviewers look for:**

- Meaningful engagement through research, design, observation, or hands-on work
- Time spent is apparent and aligns with the project goals (about 8–10 hours)

Level	Description
Exemplary	Strong engagement and clear effort throughout
Expected	Adequate effort that fits the project scope
Emergent	Limited or uneven effort
Unsatisfactory	Minimal work completed

### 4. Documentation & Reflection

**What reviewers look for:**

- Evidence of your process (notes, photos, sketches, data, etc.)
- Reflection on what you learned and why it matters

Level	Description
Exemplary	Clear documentation and thoughtful reflection on learning
Expected	Process and learning are explained
Emergent	Documentation or reflection is brief or unclear
Unsatisfactory	Documentation or reflection is missing



## 5. Final Zoom Presentation

### What reviewers look for:

- A short, recorded presentation that explains your project clearly
- Covers topic, approach, outcomes, and takeaways

Level	Description
Exemplary	Well-organized, engaging, and easy to follow
Expected	Clear and complete presentation
Emergent	Some parts are unclear or missing
Unsatisfactory	Presentation not submitted or very incomplete

## 6. Submission & Timing

### What reviewers look for:

- All materials submitted by the deadline (or approved extension)

Level	Description
Exemplary / Expected	Project submitted on time and complete
Emergent	Late or missing pieces
Unsatisfactory	Project not submitted