

Winterbourne Centre for Horticulture

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2025-2026 RHS Qualifications

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: What courses do you offer?

A: Winterbourne will offer the following courses from autumn 2025, with lessons due to take place once a week from the middle of September to the end of June/early July and avoid Birmingham school holidays where possible.

- Wednesdays – Certificate in Garden Design (accredited by NCFE)
- Thursdays – RHS Level 3 Certificate in Practical Horticulture
- Thursdays – RHS Level 2 Certificate in the Principles of Plant Growth and Development (theory)
- Fridays – RHS Level 2 Certificate in Practical Horticulture
- Saturdays – RHS Level 2 Certificate in Practical Horticulture

Q: What is the right level of study for me?

A: A: Winterbourne does not currently offer Level 1 qualifications. Level 2 qualifications, which we do offer, are generally considered to be the right starting point for most people. Level 3 is for those with existing qualifications.

Q: What are the entry requirements?

A: Our Level 2 courses don't require you to hold specific qualifications, but you should be confident communicating in English and if you are taking a practical qualification you should be aware that it can be physically demanding. For all courses you should be able to demonstrate enthusiasm for horticulture. If you wish to join our Level 3 course, you will usually need to hold a horticulture qualification at Level 2, or be able to demonstrate equivalent experience.

Q: How do I apply?

A: An Application Form is available to download from the Winterbourne website. This form should be completed in full and emailed to winterbourne.applications@contacts.bham.ac.uk at the earliest opportunity. Alternatively, you can submit your application in person at the Winterbourne shop, or send it in the post to Learning Officer, Winterbourne House and Garden, University of Birmingham, 58 Edgbaston Park Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2RT.

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Q: What information do I need to include on my application form?

A: There are several elements to the application form:

- We need you to tell us which course or courses you want to apply for;
- Some details about yourself;
- Whether you have any disabilities or additional needs (decisions about your application are not based on this information, but it helps us to be aware of any extra support requirements we may need to prepare for);
- Your existing qualifications (you do not need to list everything, but please include your highest qualifications and anything relevant to horticulture);
- Your work experience (we do not need an extensive work history, but your current or most recent employment as well as anything relevant to horticulture are especially useful);
- Write a personal statement that explains why you want to study horticulture and demonstrates your experience of and interest in the subject.

Q: What is it like studying at the Winterbourne Centre for Horticulture?

Lessons take place in a building adjacent to the main garden at Winterbourne. For those enrolled on the practical course, outdoor activities take place in both our teaching garden and the public garden at Winterbourne.

Q: How long will I wait for a decision?

A: If you apply before June 2025, you may not hear a decision until the end of June. Thereafter you can generally expect to hear from the Learning Officer within 10 days of your application.

Q: How do I secure my place?

A: If you are offered a place on a course you will be asked to pay a non-refundable deposit to confirm your participation. Deposit amounts are available in the information downloads for each course. In your offer email you will be given a deadline for paying your deposit – deadlines will vary in length depending on the course you apply for and when the offer is made. After this deadline you may still be able to join the course if spaces are still available.

Q: How much does it cost?

A: Fees are listed below. Fees include initial assessment costs.

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- Certificate in Garden Design - £1470
- RHS Level 3 Certificate in Practical Horticulture - £2095
- RHS Level 2 Certificate in the Principles of Plant Growth and Development - £1305
- RHS Level 2 Certificate in Practical Horticulture - £1755

Winterbourne provides tools and printed course materials but learners must provide their own protective footwear, gloves, and suitable clothing. You may also choose to purchase reference books, though these are not compulsory.

The level 2 practical course includes a short, multiple choice test which must be taken at home on a computer capable of running the RHS exam software.

Q: When do I pay my fees?

A: You will have paid part of your tuition fee by paying your deposit. The remainder of your tuition fee will be due before the start of your course in September and will be split into two further payments where time allows. Details will be sent with your offer email should you receive one.

Q: How can I pay?

A: Payment is usually made online using a credit or debit card. If you cannot pay online, payment can be made by card over the phone. We cannot take payment by cheque. If your fees are being paid by your employer or other sponsor, payment by bank transfer can be arranged.

Q: If I change my mind can my deposit/tuition fee/examination fee be refunded?

A: Unfortunately not. We advise you to consider your ability to commit to and pay for your course carefully before making payment. All costs are non refundable.

Q: I have a holiday booked during term, does this matter?

A: We understand that you might have a holiday booked or become ill, and that consequently you might occasionally miss a class, but you should attempt to attend every class where possible. If you miss too many lessons, it may not be possible to catch up. There are assessment sessions for the practical classes that will be finalised as soon as possible after the start of the course.

Q: What are the exam dates?

The level 2 theory exams are due on 9th February 2026 and 22nd / 23rd June 2026

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The online assessment for the level 3 practical course is on 26th June 2026

The online assessment for the level 2 practical courses is on 19th June 2026

Practical assessment dates are not confirmed by the RHS until after the start of the course.

Q: What are the term dates?

A: Dates vary by course, but all courses will start in September 2025. In general we avoid holding classes during Birmingham school holidays and over Bank Holiday weekends but occasionally this cannot be avoided. Planned dates are available on the information sheets for each relevant course but these are subject to change.

Q: I've started a course elsewhere; can I transfer to Winterbourne?

A: If you have started a course elsewhere you may be able to join our course, but you would be expected to pay for and attend all classes. If you wish to discuss your situation in more detail, contact the Learning Officer by email (e.hill@bham.ac.uk), but please note that you will not receive a response in June.

Q: I'm taking a theory course elsewhere, can I just take exams at Winterbourne?

A: External candidates are no longer allowed to attend exams in centre. You should be able to book exams at an RHS run exam centre or book to take your exams online.

Q: Can I speak to the tutor about the course?

A: Please direct specific enquires to the Learning Officer (e.hill@bham.ac.uk) in the first instance, and if necessary they can put you in touch with a tutor.