

# Along the Botanic Garden path to a satisfying career

**John Mulhern**, principal at the Teagasc College in the National Botanic Gardens, writes about the horticulture courses offered by Teagasc

**T**he Teagasc College of Amenity Horticulture runs courses at Level 5, 6 and 7 for students who wish to progress into the industry of horticulture.

Our Level 5 programme covers the sciences that underpin all aspects of horticulture including soils, plant ID, plant propagation, landscape construction and plant protection. This course lasts 32 weeks, including four weeks of industry placement.

Our Level 6 programme allows students to specialise in more industry-focused streams including nursery stock, sports turf, food production, and landscape design. This course also lasts 32 weeks and includes 16 weeks of industry placement.

For students who wish to study at a higher level, we offer a Level 7 degree with our partner, Waterford Institute of Technology. This is a three-year degree course which covers the basic sciences of horticulture along with specific elective choices that can be followed across second and third year.

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These include landscape design, nursery stock production, sports turf and market gardening. In the final year, there is an emphasis on the business of horticulture including marketing, people management, small business management and a research project that the student can choose in a specific area of horticulture.



The National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin.

## Part-time courses

The modules or individual subjects at Level 5 and 6 can also be done as part-time standalone component awards.

This year, we are offering 35 of these awards to people who are working in different horticultural sectors.

Essentially, a student who may be working in the horticultural sector can drop in to a specific timetabled slot to do a module and drop out again and return to their job.

Plant ID and plant propagation are the two subjects that we started with in Level 5 this year, but we intend to broaden this to other subjects next year. At Level 6, we are offering the core modules in each of the four main horticultural areas: sports turf science and maintenance, nursery stock production, landscaping and food production.

## Teagasc Green Cert

The last few months have seen a significant increase in the demand for places in Teagasc colleges and centres to do Green Cert courses. Some students from farming backgrounds may also have a keen interest in horticulture.

A student who has an interest in food crops or other areas of horticulture can pursue the Level 6 Advanced Certificate in Horticulture and gain their Green Cert through this route.

This option is certainly worth considering for those who might be within a commutable radius of the Teagasc College in the National Botanic Gardens.

A student can also consider that this option could be done part-time by building modules over a period of time to accumulate the major award, which is the Green Cert.

## Industry involvement with the college

Over the coming year, we intend to look at how we can get the horticultural industry to sponsor students that are progressing through the college in an apprentice-type format.

The industry needs dedicated and committed students coming through colleges that they can merge into their business. By having academic training alongside practical training, we aim to give suitable students the best opportunity to gain a foothold in the business of horticulture.

We aim to have our degree students connected with suitable companies over the next year that will endeavour to support them financially in return for a structured training programme within their industry.

For more information on this route or any of the above, contact the college principal directly.

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