

botanic gardens

Opportunities at the National Botanic Gardens

John Mulhern,
Principal, Teagasc College



September 2019 saw a big influx of students attending first year programmes here in the Teagasc College at the National Botanic Gardens. In total, we have over 130 new students attending first year Certificate in Horticulture full-time, part-time and degree level courses.

This year on our Level 5 certificate programme, there is great interest in all our modules, especially Plant Identification, Fruit and Veg, Landscape Construction, and Biodiversity and the Natural environment, which only started recently. Keep an eye on the Teagasc website for summer course offerings at the Botanic.

The part-time learning mode is ideal for students who may be working and wish to pursue one or more modules at a time that suits them. They can achieve the full award over several years. It's a busy time in the college, and in November, we welcomed our Advanced Certificate students following either Nursery, Landscape, Turf-grass or Food Production streams.

Courses

Our Level 6 advanced Certificate in Horticulture, which is the follow-on award for Level 5 students seeking a higher qualification in horticulture, has over 50 learners who are choosing streams in Landscape, Nursery, Food, and Sportsturf. This year, Food Production is back on the college programme at Level 6 and it was the area that received the most interest from students.

Interestingly, a similar trend is evident in the degree programme, where students are choosing the Sustainable Food Production elective. A number of factors are influencing this. In first year Level 5, on top of the mandatory subjects in horticulture covering the basic sciences, we now offer additional subject choice of either Amenity Horticulture or Food Production Horticulture.

Essentially, students choose either Landscape Construction and Maintenance, or Fruit and Veg production. This then drives the selection of either Landscaping/Sportsturf versus Food Production in Level 6. While some students involved in Food Pro-



duction are going back to their own farms equipped with a Green Cert at Level 6, others will find employment with established growers.

Another subject area that our first year Level 5 students are increasingly engaging with is Biodiversity. There is no doubt that all of our students are acutely aware of the ongoing narrative in relation to climate change and biodiversity, and the high numbers looking to do the module on Biodiversity is particularly welcome.

The model of part-time learning in horticulture has been proven in the Teagasc Colleges. In our education system, it is possible to gather individual component awards and build towards a major award. Increasingly, our students are opting for component awards which over time will stack up and earn them a major award at Level 5 and Level 6, which equals a Green Cert.

However, it must be clearly stated that a full major award is not everyone's goal, nor should it be. Learners in horticulture should examine what's available from either Kildal-

ton College or the Teagasc College in the Botanic. Learners can choose either of these colleges to pursue these awards. Picking specific modules that suit your current learning curve in horticulture is absolutely possible.

i

For details on Level 5 and 6 Teagasc Horticultural Courses and Teagasc WIT courses contact:

- Teagasc College Of Amenity Horticulture, National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Co Dublin: (01) 804020.
 - Kildalton College, Piltown, Co Kilkenny. Contact details: (051) 644400.
- Applications for 2020 now open - <https://www.teagasc.ie/education/going-to-college/apply-online/>

Next open days in Colleges :

- **Friday 6 March** Teagasc Kildalton.
- **Thursday 12 March** Teagasc College at the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin.

All enquiries welcome.