

Growing Together Course

Introduction

The Growing Together Course is a new venture of Edible Estates working in partnership with the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society, and a range of community gardening and community farming organisations in Edinburgh and the Lothians. It is funded by the Local Growth Fund to support the green transition and employability.

The course will run from the start of September to the end of March 2027, it will be a part-time (seven hours/week), training programme that combines hands-on placements with community gardens and farms, with structured learning in working with people and the land.

The course will have places for 24 people who must be resident in Edinburgh. The course is free, and some travel and subsistence costs will be funded.

Participants will spend time in real settings – such as community gardens, market gardens, school farms, therapeutic gardens and community woodlands – while also taking part in seminars and guided self-directed projects on topics like community garden design, nature restoration, climate adaptation, and working with community groups.

Who It Is for

The course is designed for adults (18+) who:

- Live in Edinburgh (Edinburgh address required)
- Already have at least some basic experience of growing/horticulture, even if they have no formal qualifications
- Want to develop a career working with the land and people, e.g. in community gardening, market-scale community growing, nature restoration etc.

Participants may have a wide mix of prior experience – from practical growers with no certificates to graduates considering a change of direction. This course will not teach horticulture, it is intended to ‘train the trainers’. Applicants will need to evidence knowledge and experience in growing.

Places will be prioritised for those who are unemployed, underemployed, and/or live in a disadvantaged community.

As the placements may involve working with children and/or vulnerable adults, all course participants will need to be PVG'd as a volunteer.

What It Hopes To Achieve

The Growing Together course will aim to:

- Help participants step into or progress within green jobs, including community gardening, market gardens, community food projects, nature restoration and related roles
- Provide opportunities to gain recognised certification (for example, community horticulture units and essential certificates such as outdoor first aid), including recognising and accrediting existing skills and knowledge
- Develop participants' ability to work with communities – engaging local residents, managing volunteers, leading workshops, and supporting others to learn to grow
- Support the wider green transition and economic development in Edinburgh by creating a pipeline of skilled, community-minded practitioners

Course Format

The course would start in September 2026 and continue to the end of March 2027, and would be delivered from locations across Edinburgh and East Lothian.

Participants would attend weekly:

- Seminars (normally half days) on a range of topics delivered by experts in community gardening/farming.
- Volunteer placements at a range of community garden/farm projects.

Participants wishing to work towards an accredited certification in Community Horticulture would also be required to carry out Self-Directed Assignments (more info on this below).

Orientation & Site Visits

The course will start with an orientation session in the first week of September, followed by tours of community garden/farm sites in Edinburgh and East Lothian.

Seminars

Each week the course will provide seminar based tuition on topics including:

- Design, development and construction of community gardens

- Managing community gardens
- Establishing and running community organisations
- Working with people
- Market Gardening / Running a Horticultural Business
- Therapeutic Horticulture,
- Community Woodlands & Orchards
- School Farms and Outdoor Play
- Nature Restoration
- Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems
- Climate Adaptation
- More subjects are being lined up.

The seminars will be taught by experienced staff from partner organisations, and invited experts. The seminars would normally be half day sessions, but some may run over a full day. They will mostly be delivered in Edinburgh at the Caley's base in Saughton Park, and at Edible Estates office in Leith, though some may be held on-site in East Lothian. Travel and subsistence costs will be covered by the course.

Placements

We will facilitate the placement of participants to gain practical experience in a variety of community gardening organisations, community farms and market gardens in Edinburgh and the Lothians. Travel and subsistence costs (up to a quota) will be funded by the course.

The placements will be unpaid volunteer positions within the provider organisations (similar to WWOOFing <https://wwooof.net/>). This might include:

- Assisting in the teaching of small groups of residents to grow at a community garden
- Commercial scale growing at a horticultural enterprise
- Participating in the construction of new community garden
- Engaging with communities to identify opportunities for nature restoration in a council estate.

How it will work:

- Placement organisations will provide information about the experiences they can offer; how many participants they can take; what days, times and months they can offer placements.

- The course organisers will provide a matching service between placement providers and participants
- We expect participants to do a minimum of a half day placement each week, though within capacity, participants can do as many placements as they wish.
- Where possible we will organise for small groups (2-4 people) of course participants to attend placements together.

This will provide informal learning opportunities and assist the participants to build up a portfolio of learning, achievements and experience which will contribute to an accredited certificate (see below).

Organisations already signed to provide placements include :

- Tynninghame Farm (<https://www.tynninghame.farm/>)
- Pyrus Botanicals (<https://pyrusbotanicals.com/ethos>)
- Wester Hailes Growing Communities (<https://westerhailesgrowing.org/>)
- Edible Estates (<https://www.edibleestates.co.uk/>)
- Gifford Community Woodland (<https://giffordcommunitywoodland.com/>)
- Gracemount Walled Garden (<https://www.transitionedinburghsouth.org.uk/>)

We are also reaching out to the following organisations but no commitment has been made by them as yet. Lauriston Farm : Granton Community Gardeners : Bridgend Farm : Redhall Garden.

Certificated Learning

The course will be certified through SQA-accredited units in SRUC's 'Community Horticulture' certification. Participants will be able to choose between Levels 5, 6 or 7 to suit their needs and ambitions. There will be a combination of taught hours, placements and self-directed study. Evidence for certification would be gathered through:

- Practical work in placements (community gardens, farms, school farms, therapeutic gardens, woodlands)
- Self-directed projects and assignments (e.g. designing a notional community garden, planning funding, documenting work with groups)
- A portfolio of photos, logs, short written work, and witness statements from supervisors at the placements.

The course will provide opportunities for 'Recognition of Prior Learning' (RPL) such as participants who already know how to grow (but lack certificates). There would be scope to:

- Verify and accredit existing skills through assessment against unit outcomes
- Use their current practice and past experience as part of the portfolio evidence

Where possible, we will provide a budget for course participants to take on other certificated learning during the course. This will include Outdoor First Aid for all participants that do not already have a certificate. Other modules could include Lantra accredited certificates such as brush cutter operation; ride-on machinery; basic chainsaw, highly valued in land-based roles.

For further information contact greig@edibleestates.scot

<https://growingtogether.scot/growing-together-course>

[Please note, this is a draft document,
the course will be under development to the end of July.]