DIG INTO ECOLOGICAL GARDENING

Discover how to design and nurture healthy ecosystems in human spaces.

HORN FARM

WAXWING ECOWORKS CO.
GROWING ECOLOGICAL GARDENS

THE ECOLOGICAL GARDENER TRAINING PROGRAM

at the **Horn Farm Center** teaches the skills for designing, building, and stewarding biodiverse native habitats that support the interconnected health of wildlife and humans.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

From your own backyard to forest next door, the Ecological Gardener Training Program (EGTP) is your window into the world of **designing and nurturing native plant communities** that support wildlife in human-impacted spaces.

The EGTP **cultivates deep familiarity and connection with native plant communities** across a range of environments. Students develop essential knowledge of local ecology that can be applied in a variety of contexts, from lawn conversion to support native habitat at home or the workplace to pursuing a full-fledged career as an ecological landscape practitioner.

Who Takes the EGTP?

- *Landscape practitioners & aspiring stewards* looking to bolster their ecological practices and professional toolkits.
- *Employees & volunteers* eager to build healthy natural spaces at their workplace or in the community.
- *Landowners* exploring lawn conversion and restoration.
- *Career-pivoters, parents, & non-traditional students* seeking knowledge and skill for creating a biodiverse future.

The EGTP was the asset I was seeking to gain employment in the ecological landscaping industry. In less than a year's time I went from having a goal, to being educated, to interviewing with confidence, and now I'm employed!

Deanna, 2025

PROGRAM COVERAGE

FIRST FOUR WEEKS:

Ecological Core Classroom Curriculum

Tuesdays, 2/9-3/2, ***9am-12pm***

Explore new lenses for seeing natural systems. While covering the fundamentals of ecological science, the Eco Core engages students in deepening our "sense of place" in and with the landscape, integrating creative introspection, mindful movement, history, and a re-weaving of nature and culture.

Topics:

- Ecology, natural cycles, and Earth history.
- Impacts & challenges on the local landscape.
- Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK).
- Fostering relationships with flora & fauna.
- Ecological design foundations.

TWELVE WEEKS:

Hands-On Training

Tuesdays, 3/9-5/25, ***8am-12pm***

Sessions at the Horn Farm and regional reference landscapes. *Major topics:*

OBSERVE | RELATE

- Studying Reference Landscapes and Native Plant Communities.

PLAN | DESIGN

- Mapping a Habitat Garden.
- Preparing a Planting Site.

INSTALL | TEND

- Sourcing and Planting.
- Stewarding Through the Season.
- *Completing Independent Project.*

ENGAGEMENT AND OUTCOMES

Through 60 hours of classroom and hands-on learning, EGTP trainees will ...

- (Re)kindle an embodied, action-based **connection** with nature in the Lower Susquehanna bioregion.
- Gain **knowledge** in local ecology, plant identification, and designing spaces for environmental resilience.
- Enhance **observation** skills for native plants communities, reference landscapes, and ecological health.
- Practice foundational **field skills** in gardening for ecology and wildlife.
- Experience hands-on, professionally-guided **project design and implementation** in a collaborative setting.

1:12

Instructor : Student ratio

Additional perks include ...

- At least three **field trips** to regional ecological gardening destinations. Past visits have included:
  - Chestnut Grove Natural Area *(Conestoga, PA)*
  - Hungry Hook Native Plant Nursery *(Bainbridge, PA)*
  - Mt. Cuba Horticultural Center *(Hockessin, DE)*
- **Mindful movement** and body mechanics training to support stamina for continued stewardship.
- **Built-in consultation** on personal gardening or research projects.
- Take-home **native plant plugs** *(supplies allowing)*

PROGRAM SCHEDULE

Tuesdays, February 9th to May 25th, 2026

WEEKS 1-4

2/9, 2/16
2/23, 3/2

Ecological Core Curriculum

3 hours each class (9am-12pm)

WEEKS 5-16

3/9
3/16
3/23
3/30
4/6
4/13
4/20
4/25*
5/4
5/11
5/18
5/25

Hands-On Training

4 hours each class (8am-12pm)

**Note one Sunday class (4/25) for full-day field trip to Mt. Cuba Horticultural Center.*

Field Observation

- Two field trips to observe reference landscapes and plant communities.

Plan | Design

- One field trip focused on botany and plant science.
- Prepping and designing planting site at the Horn Farm.

Install | Steward

- One trip, final planting, and project presentations.

The EGTP was fantastic, so organized and interesting, wonderful field trips, all hands-on designing, building, planting ... It truly was an incredible experience that I will always hold close to my heart.

Amanda, 2022

Transportation for all classes, including off-site field trips, is the responsibility of the student.

APPLICATION AND COST

To Apply:

Head to *hornfarmcenter.org/ecological-gardening-training/* and submit an interest form. After doing so, you will receive an email from the instructor to schedule an **informal get-to-know-you meeting** to discuss your goals, needs, and questions.

Program Cost: $1500

$25/hr for 16 weeks covering instructor hours, Horn Farm facilities and tools, field trip reservations, plant purchases, and program supplies.

Completing Payment:

After submitting a nonrefundable **$200 deposit**, you will be offered a four-installment payment plan to break down payments over the course of the program.
Scholarship funding not guaranteed at this time. See webpage for details and updates.

Questions? Reach us at education@hornfarmcenter.org

Class of 2022

First graduates of the EGTP!

Class of 2024

Class of 2025

"The EGTP was the perfect opportunity for me to tap into the world of native plants and designing without having to commit to multiple years of education. It's great for someone who is just starting their journey into learning about plants, gardening, and ecology. [...] Elyse is a kind and helpful instructor who, you can tell, loves what she does, and in return that energy is given to everyone in the program. This class has sparked the fire I needed to begin my lifelong education on all things environmental."

Paola, 2026

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