



## National Unit specification: general information

**Unit title:** Soft Landscaping: Introduction to Plant Groups, Selection and Use

**Unit code:** H09F 10

**Superclass:** SE

**Publication date:** January 2012

**Source:** Scottish Qualifications Authority

**Version:** 02

## Summary

The Unit is designed to enable candidates with limited or no previous experience to develop their skills and knowledge in soft landscaping. It introduces and develops the knowledge and practical skills to name plants, plant groups and their uses. It also enables candidates to plan, create and maintain a soft landscape feature. This is an optional Unit in the National Certificate in Rural Skills at SCQF level 4. It is also available for candidates as a free-standing Unit.

This Unit is suitable for candidates who:

- ◆ are undertaking the study of this subject for the first time.
- ◆ wish to develop practical skills and knowledge of soft landscaping as an interest subject.
- ◆ wish to prepare for a career or further study within land based industries.

## Outcomes

- 1 Investigate plant groups used in soft landscaping.
- 2 Plan a soft landscape feature.
- 3 Create a soft landscape feature demonstrating safe working practices.
- 4 Maintain a soft landscape feature demonstrating safe working practices.

## Recommended entry

Entry is at the discretion of the centre. Candidates do not need any prior knowledge or experience of soft landscaping. However, an interest in growing plants, gardening or enjoyment of outdoor, practical work would be an advantage.

## **General information (cont)**

### **Credit points and level**

1 National Unit credit at SCQF level 4: (6 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 4\*)

*\*SCQF credit points are used to allocate credit to qualifications in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). Each qualification in the Framework is allocated a number of SCQF credit points at an SCQF level. There are 12 SCQF levels, ranging from Access 1 to Doctorates.*

### **Core Skills**

Achievement of this Unit gives automatic certification of the following Core Skills component:

- ◆ Critical Thinking at SCQF level 4
- ◆ Planning and Organising at SCQF level 4

There are also opportunities to develop aspects of Core Skills which are highlighted in the Support Notes of this Unit specification.

## **National Unit specification: statement of standards**

**Unit title:** Soft Landscaping: Introduction to Plant Groups, Selection and Use

Acceptable performance in this Unit will be the satisfactory achievement of the standards set out in this part of the Unit specification. All sections of the statement of standards are mandatory and cannot be altered without reference to SQA.

All relevant operational procedures undertaken in this Unit must adhere to current health and safety legislation, regulations, codes of practice and manufacturers' recommendations where appropriate. It is important that appropriate learning environments are used and risk assessment carried out and suitable personal protective equipment provided and used by the candidates.

### **Outcome 1**

Investigate plant groups used in soft landscaping.

#### **Performance Criteria**

- (a) Compare the use of common and binomial botanical names.
- (b) Describe plant groups and state their uses in soft landscaping.
- (c) Describe key characteristics of plant groups.
- (d) Describe optimum conditions for plant groups to thrive.
- (e) Identify plants using common and binomial names and state which plant group they belong to.

### **Outcome 2**

Plan a soft landscape feature.

#### **Performance Criteria**

- (a) Assist with measuring and assessing a site for soft landscaping.
- (b) Select suitable plant groups and plants based on the site assessment and conditions.
- (c) Produce a basic scale plan showing the positions of the selected plants.
- (d) Provide a name list and basic information about the selected plants and plant groups.

### **Outcome 3**

Create a soft landscape feature demonstrating safe working practices.

#### **Performance Criteria**

- (a) Assist with preparing the site and plants.
- (b) Assist with interpreting the plan and positioning the plants.
- (c) Carry out planting and plant establishment tasks.
- (d) Demonstrate safe working practices.

## **National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)**

**Unit title:** Soft Landscaping: Introduction to Plant Groups, Selection and Use

### **Outcome 4**

Maintain a soft landscape feature. demonstrating safe working practices.

#### **Performance Criteria**

- (a) Assist with assessing the maintenance requirements
- (b) Plan the maintenance of the soft landscape feature.
- (c) Carry out soft landscape maintenance tasks.
- (d) Demonstrate safe working practices.

#### **Evidence Requirements for this Unit**

Evidence is required to demonstrate that candidates have achieved all Outcomes and Performance Criteria.

Examples of suitable projects can be found in Guidance on Content and Context section of this Unit.

Performance evidence supported by written/oral recorded evidence is required to show that all Outcomes and Performance Criteria have been achieved. Evidence should be gathered under open-book conditions.

All relevant operational procedures undertaken in this Unit must adhere to current health and safety legislation, regulations, codes of practice and manufacturers' recommendations where appropriate. It is important that appropriate learning environments are used and risk assessment carried out and suitable personal protective equipment provided and used by the candidates.

#### **Outcome 1 — Written and/or oral evidence must include:**

Candidates describing in simple terms the correct method of writing and the advantages and disadvantages of using common and binomial plant names. The description should include the use of genus, species, cultivated variety and common names

The investigation of a minimum of five plant groups. For each group the candidate should state its name and one way it is used in soft landscaping and describe in simple terms a minimum of two characteristics and two optimum growing conditions typical of the group.

Candidates must correctly identify a minimum of five plants, each from a different plant group, using their common and binomial names and the plant group to which they belong. The plants used should be commonplace and typical of their plant group.

Plant groups studied might be selected from: trees; shrubs; roses; mixed plantings; climbing plants and wall shrubs; herbaceous perennials; bulbs; bedding plants and annuals; ground cover; heathers and conifers; wildlife planting; pond and wetland; dry and gravel; woodland garden; rock garden and alpines; hedging. Other typical recognised groups may be used as appropriate.

## **National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)**

**Unit title:** Soft Landscaping: Introduction to Plant Groups, Selection and Use

### **Outcome 2 — Written/oral, product and performance evidence will include:**

Candidate participation in measuring and assessing a site suitable for soft landscaping.

Based on the site information the candidate must select a minimum of 20 plants of at least 10 different species or cultivated varieties, from between two and five different plant groups that are suitable for the situation and conditions.

Production of a simple scale plan that shows the position and spacing of each of their chosen plants.

Provision of information including the names of each plant, the group it belongs to and some basic information about the plant. This should include: botanical/binomial name, common name, mature height and spread, season/month of interest in terms of flower, foliage or other appropriate key feature.

### **Outcome 3 — Written/oral, product and performance evidence must include:**

Effective candidate participation in all aspects of preparation of the site and plants.

Correct interpretation of plans and proper setting out/positioning, planting and immediate aftercare of the plants to an acceptable standard for successful establishment. Candidates must demonstrate that they can work safely at all times.

### **Outcome 4 — Performance and written/oral evidence must include:**

Correct assessment and planning of the maintenance needs of a selected soft landscape feature. The assessment and planning exercise must take into account the age, growth and health of the plants and the maintenance required for a successful soft landscape feature; Candidates must demonstrate that they can work safely at all times.

## National Unit specification: support notes

**Unit title:** Soft Landscaping: Introduction to Plant Groups, Selection and Use

This part of the Unit specification is offered as guidance. The support notes are not mandatory.

While the exact time allocated to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre, the notional design length is 40 hours.

### Guidance on the content and context for this Unit

The context involves the candidate, at a basic level, studying, describing, assessing the key characteristics and needs of plants, selecting plants, planning and carrying out planting, aftercare and maintenance of a soft landscaping feature.

Centres must ensure that the scale and complexity of the task is suitable to the level of the Unit and appropriate to the situation and Outcome. For example, in a planting exercise, two standard trees may be appropriate but if using bedding plants ten or twenty may be appropriate.

This Unit is designed to allow the candidate to develop the basic skills required for soft landscaping and understanding the naming, requirements, selection and use of plants and plant groups commonly used in soft landscaping. Candidates are introduced to plant identification using botanical names, the use and requirements of typical soft landscaping plant groups and the preparation of design plans. This provides additional skills to those candidates who may already have achieved the Unit DX13 10 *Soft Landscaping: an Introduction* whilst also covering plant establishment and maintenance skills for those with no previous experience or who would benefit from consolidation.

The Unit will provide candidates with the skills, understanding and confidence to be able to carry out basic soft landscaping work and to progress effectively on to more advanced Soft Landscaping Units at SCQF level 5 such as: F6AW 11 *Soft Landscaping: General Plantings*; D895 11 *Soft Landscaping: Specialist Plantings*; D892 11 *Soft Landscaping: Trees and Shrubs* or other Units in horticulture, landscaping or related areas.

The Unit should focus on providing exposure to a range of amenity, horticultural and landscape uses of plant groups, particularly in Outcome 1. However, aspects of the Unit can be delivered through projects in a variety of contexts (eg Trees as a plant group could be used for: landscaping or amenity planting, forestry, farm shelterbelt, wildlife conservation, game cover).

It is important that candidates are introduced to a range of commonly used soft landscaping plant groups preferably through direct experience and observation and that ideally they are involved in a number of different soft landscaping projects in order to introduce them to a range of skills and experiences.

## National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

**Unit title:** Soft Landscaping: Introduction to Plant Groups, Selection and Use

### Outcome 1

Candidates should have first hand experience of at least five plant groups commonly used in soft landscaping each containing a variety of plants that show characteristics & optimum growing conditions typical of the group. PCs (b), (c) and (d) can be integrated but candidates should make the distinction between them: (b) what different plant groups are and how each is used; (c) what is/are the key feature(s) of each group; (d) what are the optimum conditions/climate/environment for them to thrive.

Plant groups studied should be appropriate to the situation but typically might include: trees; shrubs; roses; mixed plantings; climbing plants and wall shrubs; herbaceous perennials; bulbs; bedding plants and annuals; ground cover; heathers and conifers; wildlife planting; pond and wetland; dry and gravel; woodland garden; rock garden and alpines; hedging.

The emphasis should be placed upon identification, understanding the requirements, characteristics and uses of the plant groups (ie their shared general features) more than of the individual plants.

A simple example and explanation of correct use and comparison of the common and binomial names of a familiar plant species and a familiar cultivated variety should be used to illustrate the naming of plants and the reason for the use of botanical/scientific names.

### Outcome 2

Candidates must take part in the project to measure and assess the condition and characteristics of a site and carry out a simple plant selection and planning process focussing on plant groups suitable for the situation. The plans do not have to be implemented but the candidates should be given the experience of working in and planning for a real site. In addition to the assessor's checklist, candidates should produce evidence of their progress which may include work in written, graphical, photographic, video or oral form.

### Outcome 3

While a plan/site used for Outcome 2 may be used in Outcome 3, candidates are likely to have a more valuable experience from the use of a different site and plant groups and working from a more sophisticated (eg tutor-prepared) planting plan than is required in Outcome 2.

Candidates should be involved and contribute to all aspects of site and plant preparation, setting out, planting and immediate aftercare for plant establishment. The range of tasks involved to meet the Performance Criteria will vary according to the feature and situation. The assessor checklist should be adapted to suit the situation. The tasks might include: ground clearance, cultivation, incorporating organic matter, interpreting plans, marking out, pre-planting care of plants, setting-out plants, planting at correct depth, spacing and orientation, support, tying, shelters or guards, watering, mulching, formative pruning.

Candidates should also produce a record of their work and be encouraged to review and evaluate individual and team tasks and be aware of hazard, risk, health and safety issues and care and maintenance of equipment.

## National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

**Unit title:** Soft Landscaping: Introduction to Plant Groups, Selection and Use

### Outcome 4

Candidates should be introduced to the range of skills involved in the maintenance of soft landscape features. It would benefit candidates to experience plantings of different ages, including mature or 'over-mature' soft landscape features. They should be supported in identifying the plant groups and plants present and in deciding on the maintenance needs and planning the order of tasks to be carried out. Candidates should be introduced to a variety of fundamental skills for maintaining soft landscapes and plant health. These skills can be applied in a wide range of situations and supported in developing the practical skills and reasoning behind the tasks, methods and timing relevant to the particular situation. This might include different methods of: weed control (including awareness of chemical methods), pruning, mulching and feeding, checking health and for pest and disease. Candidates should also produce a record of their work and be encouraged to review and evaluate individual and team tasks and be aware of hazard, risk, health and safety issues and care and maintenance of equipment.

This Unit is aligned to aspects of the following National Occupational Standards (NOS) from Lantra:

- (CU61) Assist with planting and establishing plants
- (CU62) Assist with maintaining plants
- (CU71) Assist with the preparation of growing media

### Guidance on learning and teaching approaches for this Unit

All relevant operational procedures undertaken in this Unit must adhere to current health and safety legislation, regulations, codes of practice and manufacturers' recommendations where appropriate. It is important that appropriate learning environments are used and risk assessment carried out and suitable personal protective equipment provided and used by the candidates.

It is important to have a mix of classroom or theoretical and practical input but the emphasis should be on experiential learning using a mentoring/coaching approach to develop understanding of soft landscaping and explain the theory behind the practical skills as the candidate carries out a range of suitable tasks to meet the Outcome requirements.

During the Unit the candidate will have the opportunity to develop aspects of the following employability skills:

- ◆ attendance and time keeping
- ◆ planning and preparing for work
- ◆ working with others
- ◆ awareness of efficient use of resources
- ◆ following instructions
- ◆ working safely
- ◆ self evaluation and review.



## National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

**Unit title:** Soft Landscaping: Introduction to Plant Groups, Selection and Use

### Opportunities for developing Core Skills

In this Unit candidates will create a soft landscape feature. Candidates will assist with selecting appropriate plants, planning the feature, assisting in the creation of soft landscape and then finally helping with the maintenance of a soft landscape.

As they are doing this Unit candidates will be developing aspects of the Core Skills in *Communication, Working with Others* and *Problem Solving*.

This Unit has the Problem Solving components of Critical Thinking and Planning and Organising embedded in it, so when the candidate achieves this Unit their Core Skills profile will be updated to show they have achieved Critical Thinking and Planning and Organising at SCQF level 4.

### Guidance on approaches to assessment for this Unit

Performance evidence supported by an assessor checklist, together with written and/or oral evidence, is required to show that all Outcomes and Performance Criteria have been achieved.

This might include paper based or electronic information on plant names, plants and plant groups for Outcome 1 or written, graphical, photographic, video or oral records for Outcomes 2, 3 and 4. Candidates must use safe working practices at all times.

Assessor observation checklists, other assessment records and candidate's evidence should be updated regularly to keep track of progress.

### Opportunities for the use of e-assessment.

E-assessment may be appropriate for some assessments in this Unit. By e-assessment we mean assessment which is supported by Information and Communication Technology (ICT), such as e-testing or the use of e-portfolios or e-checklists. Centres which wish to use e-assessment must ensure that the national standard is applied to all candidate evidence and that conditions of assessment as specified in the Evidence Requirements are met, regardless of the mode of gathering evidence. Further advice is available in *SQA Guidelines on Online Assessment for Further Education (AA1641, March 2003)*, *SQA Guidelines on e-assessment for Schools (BD2625, June 2005)*.

### Disabled candidates and/or those with additional support needs

The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments, or considering whether any reasonable adjustments may be required. Further advice can be found on our website [www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements](http://www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements)

## History of changes to Unit

Version	Description of change	Date
02	Core Skills Components Critical Thinking and Planning and Organising at SCQF level 4 embedded.	19/01/2012

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