

# Training Case Studies: Courses & Apprenticeships

## **Organiclea: City and Guilds Horticulture Courses**

Organiclea is a workers' co-op that runs a market garden and horticultural training centre on the edge of London. Their main growing site, Hawkwood, is a 12 acre council market garden near Chingford Waltham Forest. Since 2009 they have been working in partnership their council's adult learning service to deliver City and Guilds Levels 1 and 2 in horticulture, as well as AQA Level 1 courses at other community gardens. These provide an assessment framework to follow, and a recognised qualification. Level 2 is an "industry standard", as it is a level of training that most horticultural employers would look for. Although the qualifications are "general" (ie not organic), at Organiclea the courses are taught in the context of an organic growing system.

The courses give students a good level of practical experience with a sound theoretical underpinning. Successful learners come out qualified, proficient, and often inspired, as gardeners and food growers, but many elements of establishing/running a market garden are not touched on e.g. marketing/distribution, finances, and machinery. An on-site classroom, together with an acre of glasshouses, outside raised beds and other growing areas, and a vineyard and orchard, allow many opportunities for demonstrations and practicals. The courses vary from being two-thirds theory, in the case of the Level 2 Extended Certificate, to being 80% practical, as in the case of the Work-Based Level 1. All practicals are meaningful and useful, since they also contribute to getting work done in the market garden.



Currently courses are free to those on Job Seekers' Allowance; full fees are £250 - £400 (Level 2) and £170 (Level 1), with fees for those on low incomes half that. Around 100 people complete the Organiclea horticulture courses each year. Learners who complete a Level 1 bring their new skills and knowledge to their own/ community gardens. Level 2 participants, on the whole, are looking for the course to support them in gaining a livelihood in food growing, and many achieve this. Some get jobs on rural farms/ market gardens and many apply their skills in urban community garden development, therapeutic horticulture and sustainable food enterprises.

<https://www.organiclea.org.uk/we-help-you-grow-your-own/training-2/training/>

## **Future Growers: Soil Association Organic Apprenticeship Scheme**

The Soil Association's Future Growers programme has run since 2007, and has trained over 80 organic entrepreneurs, many of whom have gone on to establish successful horticultural businesses of their own. During its first phase the scheme brought together experienced growers who needed reliable employees, with people who were keen to work and learn about fruit and vegetable production. As well as practical, hands on training and seminars from organic experts the trainees also received a fair wage. The Future Growers were enrolled either in traineeships lasting a year, or apprenticeships lasting two. In addition to learning 'on the job', a series of workshops and educational weekends were run throughout the year. As well as learning the technical know-how of growing, they were also trained in business and marketing skills.

In 2017, the scheme opened its doors wider. Focussing on six weekend-long training events, rather than the matching service, has allowed more people to get involved. This year, 15 future growers are enrolled in the course, with more on a waiting list for next year. Also in 2017, the Soil Association launched its "Digging into Horticulture" programme, which introduces new entrants to the possibilities and opportunities within large-scale horticulture. Funded by the Princes' Countryside Fund, two 2-day study tours to the Isle of Wight and South Coast, and the Vale of Evesham enabled students to examine their preconceptions

of horticulture and provide them with real-life exposure to the sector. The visits gave the students a better understanding of the day-to-day functioning of large-scale horticulture, and were followed by a focus group, to enable attendees to explore their attitudes towards the sector and how the visits might influence their own careers.

<https://www.soilassociation.org/farmers-growers/supporting-you/future-growers/> and <https://www.soilassociation.org/blogs/2017/may/digging-into-horticulture-student-programme/>

## Kindling Trust

The Kindling Trust has established a network for sustainable food initiatives (Feeding Manchester) linking market gardens with markets and training opportunities. They work closely with existing local organic growers and buyers, such as the box scheme, Manchester Veg People and Unicorn Grocery. With demand for vegetables growing in Manchester, there is a need for more commercial organic growers to supply these buyers, as well as other local Farmers Markets and box schemes. The three stages of training initiatives run by Kindling Trust are:



**The Land Army** – Volunteer trips go out three days (9.30am-5pm) per week to help on the different Kindling Trust market gardens, giving an initial taster of commercial growing

**The Commercial Growers Course** – A four day course costing £100, with optional two days placement to practise skills learned on the course.

**FarmStart** – A farm incubator initiative offering “new growers” a 0.25 acre plot to try out commercial growing, and to supply local markets such as Manchester Veg People.

The course is taught by experienced growers at their sites and covers the key areas for setting up and running a food growing enterprise, including:

- Running a food growing business (including finances, legal issues, record-keeping, Health & Safety, managing volunteers) and co-operative business models.
- Understanding and maintaining soil fertility
- Small-scale market gardening – focusing on plant propagation and salad leaf production
- Field-scale vegetable production, including pests and diseases and machinery maintenance

The Farm Start programme has been running since 2013, during which time a twenty people have taken on plots. Many of these have gone on to work for existing growers, or have taken on their own sites. After five years of operating at one site, a second 1.5 acre site has been added, while investments to improve the first site are made during 2018.

[www.kindling.org.uk](http://www.kindling.org.uk)