



Program Policies and Continuing Education Requirements

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Overview

The **ecoPRO Sustainable Landscape Professional Certification Program** provides advanced certification throughout Washington State for individual landscape professionals. Individuals must meet program eligibility and testing requirements to become certified.

The ecoPRO Sustainable Landscape Professional Certification Program publishes best practices for sustainable landscaping, administers a training program that teaches best practices, publishes study materials, administers a certification examination, and renews certified individuals who show proof of continuing education in sustainable best landscape practices gained over the previous three years.

The ecoPRO training is not required for certification; however, it is highly recommended that individuals seeking certification attend a training conducted by the ecoPRO program or an Education Partner.¹ The training is designed to be an advanced training and assumes participants have entry knowledge of landscape design, construction, and maintenance practices as well as field experience. Individuals who both meet eligibility requirements and are seeking certification will be given first priority for training registration.

Eligibility Requirements for Certification

To be eligible for ecoPRO Sustainable Landscape Professional Certification, an individual must demonstrate professional status by:

- Being certified through a professional organization such as the Association of Professional Landscape Designers (APLD); International Society of Arboriculture (ISA); Irrigation Association (IA); Washington Association of Landscape Professionals (WALP); or Washington State Nursery and Landscape Association (WSNLA);
- Being a licensed Landscape Architect or graduate of an accredited landscape architecture program;
- Or having an associate degree or higher in horticulture or a related field, and three years of professional horticultural experience.

Certification Requirements

To become certified, eligible individuals must:

- Read required study material;
- Pass an examination that demonstrates knowledge and competence in each area of sustainable landscape practice.
- Agree to abide by the ecoPRO Code of Ethics (provided by the ecoPRO administrator).

¹ Coordination with Education Partners is in process; please see program website after April 2014 for updates.

Certification Renewal Requirements

Individuals that have certified as ecoPRO Certified Sustainable Landscape Professionals must recertify every three years by reporting 24 continuing education units (CEUs) and paying a recertification fee of \$150. Certification will expire if individuals do not meet the requirements stated in this policy.

Certified ecoPRO professionals have 90 days after the end of their 3-year reporting period to report CEUs completed during the reporting period. The ecoPRO administrator will send notification to eligible individuals three months prior to the end of their 3-year reporting period informing them that they have three months to complete their CEUs.

Recertification Fee

The recertification fee is \$150. An invoice shall be sent to those who have met the 3-year credit requirements three months prior to their ending date.

Past Due /Inactive Status

Certified ecoPRO professionals that do not complete the 24-CEU requirement by the end of their 3-year period will be allowed a “grace period” of 90 additional days to complete the 24 CEUs and will be charged a late fee of \$50. During this 90-day period they are not allowed to use their certification credential.

Expiration

Certified ecoPRO professionals who fail to complete the CEU requirement by the end of the 90-day “grace period” will not be recertified and are not allowed to use their certification credential. They are encouraged to re-test to reinstate their certification.

Audits

Random audits shall be conducted by the ecoPRO administrator, either at the start of the third year of the recertification period or after 16 CEUs have been earned, to assess that course credits are for appropriate topics and annual “Sustainable BMP Tracking Forms” have been submitted. Those selected for audit will be asked to provide back-up documentation as evidence of their participation in the continuing education activities they have submitted.

Continuing Education Requirements

Basic Continuing Education Requirements

- Certified ecoPRO professionals must earn and report 24 continuing education units (CEUs) every three years.
- CEUs can be earned through pre-approved courses and/or education and activities that are relevant to Topics Acceptable for Credit. One CEU per year shall be granted for submitting “Sustainable BMP Tracking Form” to ecoPRO administrator annually. (*see page 2*)
- CEUs used to achieve recertification shall be spread over design, installation, and maintenance topics, with at least 3 credits required in each area. This shall be on the honor system; however, the ecoPRO administrator will conduct random audits one year before the end of the three-year recertification period, or after 16 CEUs have been earned.
- CEUs should be reported to the ecoPRO administrator by email or fax to: holly@wsnla.org or 253-661-6058. Information that should be provided:
 - Education/course name
 - Education/course provider
 - Length/duration
 - Content (agenda, outline, etc.)

Self-Submittal Procedure

Self-submittal shall be done via form downloaded from the website describing the training, talk, article, or webinar. If requesting credit for authoring an article, the published article must be submitted for approval.

Continuing Education Records

Records shall be maintained by the ecoPRO program administrator and made available via the website for certification holders to review their CEUs, deadlines, etc.

Self-Reporting Documentation Requirements

For college-level or other self-reported courses, one of the following is required to be submitted for approval:

- Certificates of completion
- Attestation from instructor
- Attendance list
- Transcript
- Official notification of grade

Education & Activities Eligible for CEUs

Approved education shall be in “advanced” topics in sustainable landscaping, not beginning courses, though this will be self-managed.

Activities shall include attending seminars or trainings, webinars, teaching or speaking at such seminars/trainings/webinars, participating in research on sustainable landscaping issues, authoring articles published in a professional publication, attending college-level courses on sustainability topics, reading relevant articles (maximum of 1 CEU per hour of reading time), and volunteering/internships that are approved in advance.

One CEU per year shall be granted for submitting “Sustainable BMP Tracking Form” to ecoPRO administrator annually.

Topics Acceptable for Credit include:

- Sustainable landscape design, installation, and maintenance
- Irrigation design, installation, and maintenance
- Stormwater management
- Emerging technologies
- Health and safety
- Sustainable materials
- Climate change
- Courses pre-approved for LEED AP credential maintenance under Sites, Water, and Materials sections
- Invasive species identification and management using IPM
- Wildlife and landscaping issues (e.g., enhancing wildlife values and/or controlling or managing wildlife through landscaping)
- Native plant communities and how to enhance/sustain
- Advanced scientific plant identification skills (e.g., grasses, ferns, sunflower family – groups with very specialized structures and vocabulary that may be difficult to distinguish)
- Other topics could include volunteer program management and/or building a community stewardship program; sustainable trail building techniques; forestland management principles and skills; leadership and/or fundraising capacity building

Program Sponsors/Pre-Approved Courses

Program sponsors should email a request with a description of the course to holly@wsnla.org at least four weeks prior to the date of the course. Information to submit includes: sponsor name and date, title, length, description of course, and anticipated learning outcomes. Professional content should be included. Website link, agenda, or brochure with description will suffice.

Approval is done by the ecoPRO administrator within two weeks of the request. The ecoPRO administrator will email sign-up sheets to the program sponsor for attendees to complete.

Pre-Approved Courses:

- Relevant topics offered by landscape industry associations: WSNLA, WALP, ISA, APLD, ASLA/AIA, IA
- University of Washington Botanic Gardens ProHort Professional Continuing Education courses
- Washington State University IPM trainings
- Green Gardening Program workshops and trainings
- Relevant topics offered by horticulture schools
- Seattle Public Utilities Rainwise contractor trainings
- Irrigation design/installation/maintenance
- Master Gardener, Master Composter/Soil Builder, or Native Plant Steward training (8 CEUs if 84-hour Master Gardener training is completed, 3 CEUs if 28-hour Master Composter training is completed, 9 CEUs if 90+-hour Native Plant Steward training is completed)
- Seattle Tilth courses on permaculture installation and design, that are designed for professionals (not for avocational gardeners and homeowners)
- Relevant health and safety courses sponsored by University of Washington Department of Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences Continuing Education Program
- LEED AP courses