



**Course Title: 2020 Master Composter Course**

Semester/Year: Fall Semester, 2020

Non-Credit, Extension Course

Location: Online, Live Q&A sessions on Zoom, Thursdays from 6:00-7:00 pm

**Course Description:**

The Vermont Master Composter training course offers an in-depth study of backyard composting. UVM Master Gardeners and others interested in home, school and community composting who take this course will learn about the many different ways to turn food scraps and yard trimmings into compost for healthier, nutrient rich soil.

**Student Learning Accommodations:**

In keeping with University policy, any student with a documented disability interested in utilizing accommodations should contact SAS, the office of Disability Services on UVM's campus. SAS works with students and faculty in an interactive process to explore reasonable and appropriate accommodations, which are communicated to faculty in an accommodation letter. All students are strongly encouraged to meet with the course coordinator to discuss the accommodations they plan to use in the course. A student's accommodation letter lists those accommodations that will not be implemented until the student meets with the coordinator to create a plan.

**Student Accessibility Services (SAS):**

A170 Living/Learning Center

802-656-7753

[access@uvm.edu](mailto:access@uvm.edu)

<http://www.uvm.edu/access>

**Contact Information:**

- **State Program & Educational Coordinator:** Beret Halverson, (Jeffords Hall 206, UVM campus) Contact via the course website or 802-656-1777 (No emails).

**Contact Me About:** Program courses (content or format), scholarships, advanced and summer trainings, the annual conference, annual reports, partnerships, promotion, advertising and marketing.

- **Office & Helpline Assistant:** Lisa Chouinard, (Jeffords 206, UVM campus)  
[master.gardener@uvm.edu](mailto:master.gardener@uvm.edu), 802-656-9562

**Contact Me About:** The course registration process, how to find something on the website, mailings, brochures, course certificates, intern badges, project signs or other office related functions.

- **Volunteer Coordinator:** Cindy Heath, (Remote, part-time)  
[cindy.heath@uvm.edu](mailto:cindy.heath@uvm.edu), 603-675-9123

**Contact Me About:** Volunteering in your local region, info about volunteer projects, how to record and report hours, certification questions, how to reactivate, information about local chapters, local events and educational opportunities.

### **Learning Objectives:**

#### **After completing this course, all students will be able to:**

- Use UVM Extension, Master Gardener/Composter, eXtension, Zoom and other online resources for learning
- Perform research on compost topics using University resources and other sources of research-based information to diagnose compost problems and provide management recommendations
- Articulate the benefits of composting
- Apply the principals of composting to creating and managing an active compost system
- Understand the basic properties of soil and the decomposition process
- Understand compost site design and managing a community compost site

#### **Track 1 students will be able to:**

- Articulate the goals and timeframe of Vermont's ACT 148
- Create compost related learning environments in the community with other Master Composter and Gardener volunteers
- Articulate the mission of the UVM Extension Master Gardener/Composter Program, including the roles and responsibilities of Master Composter volunteers, and program staff

### **How to Login to Course Website:**

1. Login to the course portal. The course is housed at eXtension's Online campus at: [campus.extension.org](https://campus.extension.org). If you have not yet been to this site, you will need to create an account. To do so, go to "Login" and click on "Create new account." You will need to complete some basic information and confirm your account via email.

2. Enroll in the course. On the home page of the eXtension Online Campus, you can find the course by searching in the course catalog. Go to: <https://campus.extension.org/> Search for: "Vermont Master Composter."

**Volunteer Expectations (Track 1 Students Read Carefully):**

- Track 1 students must complete the 10-hour internship during the 2 years after taking the course.
- The purpose of the 10-hour internship is to get hands-on experience after the course working under the mentorship of master composter volunteers. Generally, interns cannot start new projects unless there is an extenuating circumstance, such as no internship opportunities near where you live. Please let our member support staff know if this is the case so we can make an exception for you. Only Certified Master Composter volunteers can start new on-going (year to year) projects.
- All volunteer hours for certified volunteers must be done at approved on-going projects. (Please review the list on our website) or on one-time requests that come from partner organizations through the state office. These are sent out to the composter list serv.

Throughout the course all Track 1 students should carefully assess their capacity to complete the 10-hour hands-on internship in order to become a certified master composter volunteer. Please read carefully below about what is required of a volunteer internship, and of Master Composter volunteers more broadly. Please note, there is one additional module and an in-person hands-on class required for Track 1 students. If you are unsure about volunteering you may still participate in the volunteering module to find out more.

UVM Extension Master Composter volunteers are considered representatives of the University and they share research-based composting knowledge with the public through the helpline, talks and displays at fairs, farmers' markets and other outlets, or assist with UVM Extension Master Gardener or Composter approved community projects.

Upon successful completion of the course, students in Track 1 go on to become certified Vermont Master Composter volunteers by completing a hands-on internship of 10 hours working on approved projects under the guidance of already certified Master Composters.

**Switching Tracks:**

Should you find that you are no longer able to complete the volunteer internship (Track 1) requirements then you should notify the course coordinator as soon as possible so that we can switch you to Track 2 or Track 3 on the course website and in our database. If you switch to Track 2 you will be able to receive recognition of course completion but you must also stay on schedule and complete all the assignments on time. If you switch to Track 3 you will be self-paced and not receive a certificate of completion or be required to turn in assignments.

### **Dropping the Course & Partial Refunds:**

The final date to drop out of the course and receive a partial refund is Friday October 2 @11:59 pm. This includes illness, family issues, moving, job issues, other life crisis's etc. Medical issues do require a note from your doctor for a partial refund. Unfortunately, we cannot provide refunds for the course modules that you have already been given access to on the website, but we are able to provide a partial refund for modules the you have not yet accessed if you notify us before October 2. If you would like to get a partial refund, drop the course and then re-enroll in the course next year, you may reenroll on your own. We cannot track your enrollment year to year. Please carefully consider the workload and scheduling commitments prior to signing up for the course. Sorry, but we cannot make exceptions to this policy.

If you have an unforeseen circumstance, that occurs after October 2 than you may continue in the course as a Track 3 self-paced student but **no refunds** will be given to you and you will not receive a certificate of completion, or be eligible to go on to volunteer and become a Master Composter. Please contact the coordinator on the phone to explain your unforeseen circumstance and be moved to the self-paced option. Medical issues do require a note from your doctor.

### **Track 3 (self-paced):**

If you prefer learning at your own pace, or in the event that you sign up for Track 1 or 2 but realize you are unable to keep up with the course schedule after October 2, but you would still like to have access to the course materials for your own learning then you can choose this option. This means you will still have access to the course website, reading, lectures and other materials, but you will not receive grades, submit assignments, receive a certificate of completion, or go on to volunteer for certification.

### **Required Course Materials & Computer Skills:**

All of the content for this course is provided online. You will need basic computer skills, such as knowing how to download files and search the website to access the materials successfully. If you have reliable, high-speed internet access and can hear sound through your computer's speakers, you should be able to participate regardless of the type of computer or operating system you use. However, if you have an older, slower computer, or out of date software you may face some challenges with things downloading slowly. Prior to signing up for the course please carefully assess your equipment, and be aware that having an up- to-date computer and software will impact the ease with which you are able to navigate the course and access the materials. **Internet speed:** Zoom conferencing works best when you have a 1.5 mgs download speed and a 1.5 mgs upload speed. If you are unsure of your speed, PLEASE check with your internet provider prior to the course so you are able to have the best experience possible. Slow download/upload speeds can result in sound issues and this is not something our staff can resolve for you.

**Course Reading:**

*Vermont Master Composter Manual & NY Master Composter Manual.*

This is where you will find your weekly class readings. These are located for download in the “Weeks 1 & 2: Course Introduction” section of the course website. If you wish to print these manuals you must do so on your own or take them to a printing shop.

**Access to Materials:**

Course materials on the website will be available to all students until December 31 following the course conclusion.

**Attendance Expectations:**

There are no required attendance expectations for the live Q&A sessions. If you miss a Q&A session, they will be recorded and archived under each unit’s “REVIEW” section. Students are expected to watch any missed Q&A sessions. Please note that Q&A video recordings cannot be guaranteed due to tech issues that sometimes occur with the Zoom software that runs our webinars. Because this is not in our control it is recommended to attend live whenever possible.

**Course Website & Personal Email:**

All course materials will be located on this website: [campus.extension.org](https://campus.extension.org). A website account (username and password) is necessary for access. You will need to login to the website each time to return to it in your web browser, (see instructions below). Please be sure to carefully read the entire course website. Please plan to access this website weekly and your personal email daily to keep up with the course. Please read all emails sent to you by the course coordinator. These emails contain important updates that you will need to keep up with weekly.

**Course Announcements & Forums:**

All messages to the course coordinator should be directed through the website, by clicking on the “message my teacher” link at the top of the screen. Please do not email the coordinator directly. Questions and conversations are all tracked on the website in one location. If you have questions for other students you may post those on the Student Forum. Questions posted to the student forum will be emailed out to every student in the course. If you do not wish to receive forum emails, you can unsubscribe anytime by clicking “unsubscribe” at the bottom of the email. You can also set the emails to digest mode, so you receive just one email daily. If you unsubscribe please be sure to check the link to the student forum on the website daily to keep up with the course updates, student conversations and questions that might apply to you.

**Grading Criteria/Policies:**

All students must receive at least, 4 out of 5 points on each of the quizzes (80%) as well as 7 out of 10 points on the final exam, (70%). Students are also required to fill out the pre-course and post-course surveys to pass the course.

**Quizzes:**

These are open-book multiple choice questions. You can take the quizzes 2 times. Your highest grade will count.

**Final Exam:**

There is a 10-question final exam at the end of the course. The exam is open-book and multiple choice, and you may take it two times if necessary.

**Pre-Course Survey & Post Course Evaluation:**

All students are expected to complete a survey at the beginning of the course as well as a survey again at the end. The surveys will be confidential and will be used to improve the course. Please note, if you miss the survey assignments then you will not pass the course.

**Points associated with each assignment:****Introductory Assignments:**

- Pre-Course Survey (2 points)
- Introduction (1 point)

Total Possible = 3 points

**Discussion Questions**

- 1 point each x 5 questions (5 points per unit x 5 units) (25 points)

Total Possible = 25

\*\*Track 1 has 1 extra DQ for an extra 5 points

**Quizzes**

- 80% required score
- 5 points each x 5 quizzes (25 points)

Total Possible = 25 points

\*\*Track 1 has 1 extra quiz for an extra 5 points

**Final Assignments:**

- Post-Course Survey (2 points)
- 70% required score
- (10 points)

Total Possible = 12 points

**Total points possible:**

- 75 (Track 1)
- 65 (Track 2)

**Total points required to pass (70%):**

- 52 (Track 1)
- 45 (Track 2)

### **Late Work:**

Due to the large volume of students enrolled in this course at one time (85+ students), late assignments are not accepted. We understand that extenuating circumstances occur often which is why we only require an 70% to pass the course and 70% to pass the final exam, allowing you to miss a few assignments should something happen during the course.

Please carefully assess your ability to meet the requirements of the course and keep up with the weekly assignments before you enroll. Unfortunately, due to the large class size the coordinator does not have time to re-grade missed assignments. If you do not want to keep up with the schedule, or assignment due dates please choose the self-paced option. This is a firm policy, please do not ask for late credit.

### **Weekly Format & Assessments:**

Each week students are required to do the following

1. Watch a pre-recorded lecture between Friday night and Thursday night
2. Do the reading between Friday night and Thursday night
3. Post one discussion question by Wednesday 11:59pm
4. Complete the weekly 5-question quiz by Friday 11:59 pm

### **Weekly Access:**

The course is set up so that each unit will become available on a weekly basis **every Friday at 5pm**. This allows the coordinator time to work with the unit instructors, as well as set up the online technology platforms that run each module and each lecture. Should you wish to do work in advance you can do the reading listed in the course schedule below. The lectures will not be available ahead of the unit opening on Friday's at 5pm.

### **2020 Weekly Schedule & Reading:**

**Each module opens:** Friday at 5:00 pm

**Discussion Questions due:** Every Wednesday by 11:59 pm

**Live Q&A Sessions:** Every Thursday from 6:00-7:00 pm

**Quiz Due:** Every Friday by 11:59 pm

### **September 11-18 (Track 1 Only)**

Week #1: Volunteering & Outreach, Beret Halverson & Cindy Heath

This module is required for Track 1 students, but all students may participate. If you are Track 2 please message me if you would like to participate.

Assignments:

- Discussion Question due Wednesday, September 16 11:59 pm

- Background Check Form, Volunteer Application and Quiz due Friday, September 18 11:59pm

Reading:

- Vermont Master Composter Manual:  
Chapter 17: Guidelines for Effective Communication  
Chapter 18: Potential Questions from the Public
- NY Master Composter Manual:  
Chapter 6: Reaching and Teaching Others

## **September 11-18 & 18-25 (Tracks 1 & 2)**

Weeks #1 & 2: Course Introduction, Beret Halverson, Cindy Heath

Assignments:

- Read Course Welcome
- Take Pre-Course Survey
- Select your course track (1-2-3)
- Do two Introductory assignments
- Download and save syllabus, and two master composter manuals

**\*\*No quiz, or discussion question post required this week**

**\*\*Everything due Friday September 25 at 11:59pm**

Reading: No assignment, feel free to start reading ahead using the readings listed below.

## **September 25-October 2**

Week #3: Introduction to Composting, Mike Ather

Assignments:

- Discussion Question due Wednesday, September 30 11:59 pm
- Quiz due Friday October 2, 11:59 pm

Reading:

- VT Master Composter Manual:  
Chapter 2: What is Composting?  
Chapter 3: Benefits of Backyard Composting  
Chapter 4: History of Compost  
Chapter 7: Compost Pile Ingredients  
Chapter 8: Building and Layering Your Pile  
Chapter 9: Compost bins  
Chapter 10: Troubleshooting Compost Piles
- NY Master Composter Manual:  
Chapter 2: Composting  
Chapter 3: Compost Systems and Tools



## **October 2-9**

Week #4: Soils Decomposition & Ecology, Wendy Sue Harper

Assignments:

- Discussion Question due Wednesday, October 7 11:59 pm
- Quiz due Friday October 9, 11:59 pm

Reading:

VT Master Composter Manual:

- Chapter 5: The Biology of Compost

NY Master Composter Manual:

- Chapter 1: Soil & Decomposition Science

## **October 9-16**

Week #4: Using Compost Mulch and Cover Crops, Mike Ather

Assignments:

- Discussion Question due Wednesday, October 14 11:59 pm
- Quiz due Friday October 16, 11:59 pm

Reading:

- Extension article:

<https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/sites/catalog/files/project/pdf/em9034.pdf>

- VT Master Composter Manual:
  - Chapter 11: Compost Use
  - Chapter 12: The Benefits of Compost Use
  - Chapter 13: Compost Tea
  - Chapter 14: Vermicomposting, Worm Composting
  - Chapter 15: Ecological Landscape Maintenance and Design Approaches

NY Master Composter Manual:

- Chapter 5: Using Compost, Mulch and Cover Crops

## **October 16-23**

Week #5: Community Composting, Natasha Duarte and Athena Bradley

Assignments:

- Discussion Question due Wednesday, October 21 11:59 pm
- Quiz due Friday October 23, 11:59 pm

Reading:

- NY Master Composter Manual: Chapter 4 Site Design & Management

## **October 23-30**

Week #6: Vermont Act 148, Anne Bijur and Emma Stool

Assignments:

- Discussion Question due Wednesday, October 28 11:59 pm

- Quiz due Friday October 30, 11:59 pm

Reading:

- Please read the content on the following websites
  1. <https://cswd.net/about-cswd/universal-recycling-law-act-148/>
  2. <http://dec.vermont.gov/waste-management/solid/universal-recycling>

## **October 30-November 6**

Week #7: Final Assignments (Self-Paced)

- Post Course Survey and Final Exam due 11:59 pm, Friday November 6

## **Dates TBD**

### **In-person Community Composting Sessions**

We offer two in-person sessions, on two different Saturdays during the course (DATES TBD). The content will be the same in both sessions. One will be held in the northern region of the state and one in the southern region. You may choose which one you would like to attend. The exact dates and locations are to be determined, and the class coordinator will update you on the dates and times as soon as they are scheduled.

The in-person session is optional for Track 2 & 3 students, and required for all Track 1 students as the focus is on community composting. If you are Track 1 and cannot attend either of the two in-person sessions please notify the instructor and find an alternative in-person session to attend. After attending the alternative class, you will be required to have the instructor provide email verification that you have attended to [beret.halverson@uvm.edu](mailto:beret.halverson@uvm.edu)