



Course Title: **2021 Master Composter Course**

Semester/Year: Fall Semester, 2021

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 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

<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 Beret about: Program courses (content or format), scholarships, advanced and summer trainings, the annual conference, annual reports, partnerships, promotion, advertising and marketing.

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

Contact Lisa 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, 603-675-9123

Contact Cindy 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:

- 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." 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.

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 an in-person 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.

Track 2 (self-paced)

If you prefer learning at your own pace and would like to have access to the course materials and earn a "Home Composting" certificate, then you may choose this option. This means you will have access to the website, reading, lectures, quizzes, and other materials from September 10th-December 15th. You will still need to submit all assignments by December 15th, and if they are complete, you will receive a certificate of completion called the "Home Composter" Certificate.

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 the self-paced (Track 2) on the course website and in our database. If you switch to Track 2 you will be able to receive recognition of course completion via the Home Composter Certificate upon completion of all assignments by December 15th.

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 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 re-enroll 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.

Unforeseen Issue after October 2:

If you have an unforeseen circumstance, that occurs **after October 2** than you may continue in the course as a Track 2 self-paced student, but **no refunds** will be given, and you will not be eligible to go on to volunteer and become a Master Composter. If you are un-able to complete all the assignments by December 15 then you will not receive a certificate of Home Composting. 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.

Required Course Materials & Computer Skills:

All the content for this course is provided online.

- You will need basic computer skills, such as knowing how to download and upload word and pdf 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.
- If you have an older, slower computer, or out of date software you may face some challenges. 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.
- 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 can have the best experience possible. Slow download/upload speeds can result in sound issues which our staff cannot 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 “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:

- If you are a Track 1 (volunteer-track) student attendance is required for the live Q&A sessions. The goal of these sessions is to interact with the instructors and other students.
- If you miss a Q&A session due to an unforeseen circumstance or emergency, they will be recorded and posted on the website.
- Students are not expected to notify the coordinator if they will miss a Q&A session but should plan to miss no more than 1 session.
- Please note that Q&A video recording postings 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 for most of the sessions.

Course Website & Personal Email:

- All course materials will be located on this website: 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:

Quizzes:

- These are open-book multiple choice questions. You can take the quizzes 2 times. Your highest grade will count.
- All students must receive at least, 4 out of 5 points on each of the quizzes (80%)

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.
- All students must receive at least 7 out of 10 points on the final exam, (70%).

Pre-Course & Post Course Surveys:

- 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.

Weekly Q&A sessions:

- These are for Track 1 students only who are required to attend live. Track 2 students may watch the recordings.
- Attendance is tracked for Track 1 students
- Track 1 students should plan to show up on Zoom with cameras on, and plan to interact with students and instructors. This is designed as a small group activity to encourage interaction.

In-person Sessions

- We offer two in-person sessions on **October 16 and 23 from 1:00 pm -3:00 pm** with Natasha Duarte.
- Locations are in St. Albans at the St. Albans City School and in Ludlow Vermont at the Ludlow Community Garden.
- 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 in-person session is optional for Track 2 students and required for all Track 1 students as the focus is on community composting.

- If you are Track 1 and cannot attend due to an extenuating emergency or medical circumstance, please notify the course Coordinator via the course website asap.

Points associated with each assignment: (*Subject to change)

Track 1			Track 2		
Assignment	Points per assignment	Total Possible	Assignment	Points per assignment	Total Possible
Pre-Course Survey	2	2	Pre-Course Survey	2	2
Q&A Questions	5	30	Quizzes	5	30
Q&A Weekly Attendance	1	7	Post-Course Survey	2	2
Quizzes	5	30	Final Exam	10	10
Post-Course Survey	2	2	Feedback (Extra Credit)	1	7
Final Exam	10	10			
Feedback (Extra Credit)	1	7			
Total Points Possible		88	Total Points Possible		85
Total Points required to pass-70%		67	Total Points required to pass-70%		65

(Track 1) Late Work:

- Late assignments are not accepted. Unfortunately, the coordinator does not have time to re-grade missed assignments unless there is an unforeseen emergency.
- We understand that extenuating (non-emergency) circumstances occur which is why we only require 70% to pass the course, 80% on quizzes and 70% on the final exam. This allows 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 in Track 1.
- If you do not want to keep up with the schedule, or assignment due dates please choose the self-paced (Track 2) option.

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.

2021 Track 1 Weekly Schedule:

Weekly Format & Assessments:

Each module opens: Friday at 5:00 pm, starting on Friday September 10.

Each week students are required to do the following:

1. Watch a pre-recorded lecture between Friday night and Wednesday night
2. Do the reading between Friday night and Wednesday night
3. Post one Q&A question by Wednesday night at 11:59pm
4. Attend the online Q&A session on Zoom Thursday night from 6-7pm
5. Complete the weekly 5-question quiz by the following Friday night at 11:59 pm

September: 10-17

Week #1: Course Introduction, Beret Halverson

Assignments:

- Q&A Question due Wednesday at 11:59 pm
- Quiz due Friday at 11:59pm
- Thursday night Q&A session with instructor from 6-7pm on Zoom

Reading: Please read all materials provided on the website in this section.

September 17-24

Week #2: Volunteering & Outreach, Beret Halverson & Cindy Heath

This module is required for Track 1 students, but all students may participate

Assignments:

- Q&A Question due Wednesday at 11:59 pm
- Background Check, & Quiz due Friday at 11:59pm
- Thursday night Q&A session with instructor from 6-7pm on Zoom

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 24-October 1

Week #3: Introduction to Composting, Wendy Sue Harper

Assignments:

- Q&A Question due Wednesday at 11:59 pm
- Quiz due Friday at 11:59pm
- Thursday night Q&A session with instructor from 6-7pm on Zoom

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 1-8

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

Assignments:

- Q&A Question due Wednesday at 11:59 pm
- Quiz due Friday at 11:59pm
- Thursday night Q&A session with instructor from 6-7pm on Zoom

Reading:

VT Master Composter Manual:

- Chapter 5: The Biology of Compost

NY Master Composter Manual:

- Chapter 1: Soil & Decomposition Science

October 8-15

Week #5: Using Compost Mulch and Cover Crops, Natasha Duarte

Assignments:

- Q&A Question due Wednesday at 11:59 pm
- Quiz due Friday at 11:59pm
- Thursday night Q&A session with instructor from 6-7pm on Zoom

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 15-22

Week #6: Community Composting, Natasha Duarte

Assignments:

- Q&A Question due Wednesday at 11:59 pm
- Quiz due Friday at 11:59pm
- Thursday night Q&A session with instructor from 6-7pm on Zoom

Reading:

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

October 16: In person Session (Option 1)

- 1-3pm, Location TBD

October 22-29

Week #7: Vermont Act 148, Anne Bijur and Emma Stool

Assignments:

- Q&A Question due Wednesday at 11:59 pm
- Quiz due Friday at 11:59pm
- Thursday night Q&A session with instructor from 6-7pm on Zoom

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 23: In Person Session (Option 2)

- 1-3pm, Location TBD

October 29-November 5

Week #8: Final Assignments (Self-Paced)

- Post Course Survey and Final Exam due Friday at 11:59pm