

**Course Title:** 2019 Master Composter Course

**Semester/Year:** Fall Semester, 2019 **\*Non-Credit, Extension Course**

**Location:** Online Moodle Website, Live Q&A sessions are broadcast on Zoom, each Thursday from 6:00-7:00 pm beginning on September 26

**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.

**State Program & Course Coordinator:** Beret Halverson, (Jeffords Hall 206, UVM)

Contact via the extension course website (Go to “participants” click on my name, then “message”) or 802-656-1777 \*(No emails please). **Contact Me**

**About:** Questions related to the Master Gardener or Composter courses (content or format), course scholarships, advanced Master Gardener or Composter trainings, the annual state master gardener conference, annual reports, partnerships, promotion, advertising and marketing. Please do not contact me with general volunteer questions or with website or tech issues. Please do not email me directly. Use the website app.

**Office & Helpline Assistant:** Lisa Chouinard, (Jeffords 206, UVM)

[master.gardener@uvm.edu](mailto:master.gardener@uvm.edu), 802-656-9562 **Contact Me About:** Questions related to the Helpline, as well as the general course format, course registration process or issues, how to find something on the website, mailings, brochures, course certificates, and badges, or other office related functions. Please do not contact me with specific questions about courses (if you are a student), advanced trainings, or volunteering.

**Local 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, volunteer projects, how to record volunteers' hours, report hours and get certification, how to renew annual certification, local Master Gardener Chapters, local events and educational opportunities in your region. Please do not contact me about course registration, office related functions or with specific questions about the courses (if you are a student).

### **Course Schedule:**

**Registration Ends:** Wednesday September 11, 2019 4:30pm

**Course open:** Friday September 13, 2019, 5:00 pm

**Course Introduction Assignments:** Due Friday September 20, 11:59pm No exceptions.

**First live Q&A:** Thursday, September 26 (6:00-7:00pm)

**Final Date to Switch Tracks or Drop Course:** Friday October 4 @4:30pm (Office closed at this time).

**Course Modules End:** Friday November 1 @11:59pm

**Course Final Assignments due:** Friday November 8 @11:59pm. No exceptions. (Post-Course Survey, Final Exam, (Track 1 & 2), and Volunteer Application (Track 1 only)). Volunteer application must be physically present in my office.

### **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

## **After completing the course, 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

## **Volunteering:**

Throughout the course all 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. As you move through the course, please take the time to think about which Track will work the best for you and your schedule. 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 (#7) to find out more.

## **What does it mean to be a Master Composter Volunteer?**

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 ten hours working on approved projects under the guidance of already certified Master Composters.

## A few things to 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.

## 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 on the course website and in our database so you will be able to receive recognition of course completion through receipt of the certificate of home composting (downloadable on the website) and be removed from our volunteer listserv communications. The final deadline for switching tracks is Friday October 4 @ 11:59pm.

## Dropping the course/Refunds:

The final date to drop the course is Friday October 4 @11:59pm. If you find you are unable to continue in the course at any point before October 4, please notify the course coordinator as soon as possible. This includes illness, family issues, moving, job issues, other life crisis's etc. Medical issues do require a note from your doctor. Unfortunately, we cannot provide refunds for the course modules that you have already been given access to on the website, but we may be able to provide a partial refund for modules that you have not yet accessed if you notify

us before October 4. If you would like to get a partial refund and then re-enroll in the course next year, you may do so on your own. We cannot track your enrollment year to year.

If you have an unforeseen circumstance, that occurs after October 4 than you have two options (see below).

1. You may continue in the course as a self-paced student (see section below), 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.
2. You can drop out of the course and be given a code to re-take it again next year. No refund will be given. If you would like to do this please notify the coordinator via phone as soon as possible to explain your unforeseen circumstance. Medical issues do require a note from your doctor. Re-enrollment is done on your own using the special code we provide. We do not track enrollment year to year.

Again, please carefully consider the workload and scheduling commitments prior to signing up for the course. Sorry, but we cannot make exceptions to this policy, so please do not ask.

**Self-paced option:** 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, but you would still like to have access to the course materials for your own learning then you can choose this option. Please notify the coordinator as soon as possible, but no later than March 13 that you would like to access the course at your own pace. What this means is you will still have access to the course website, reading, lectures and other materials, but you will not receive grades, a certificate of completion, and you cannot go on to volunteer. Access to the course materials will be available to all students until Jan 1, of the new year following the course conclusion.

## **Required Course Materials:**

**Computer/Internet:** 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 assess your equipment, and be aware that having an up- to-date computer 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.

**PowerPoint:** Several lectures are provided in PowerPoint. If you do not have version 2010 or later you might experience difficulty downloading the content, or hearing the audio on narrated slides.

### **Course Reading**

- ***VT Master Composter & NY Master Composter Manuals*** - This is where you will find your weekly class readings. These are located for download in the "Course Introduction" section of the course website.

### **Time Commitment:**

Regarding the time commitment for the course, the pre-recorded lectures are generally 1-1.5 hours per week. The online live sessions are 1 hour per week (recording or live) and reading assignments are probably 1-2 hours, and discussion and feedback posts (30 minutes or less).

## Attendance Expectations:

There are no required live online Q&A session attendance expectations. If you miss a live online Q&A session, they will be recorded and archived under each module, (barring any technical difficulty). Students are expected to watch any missed Q&A sessions, and complete missed assignments before the appropriate deadlines. Please note that Q&A video lecture postings **cannot be guaranteed due to tech issues that sometimes occur** with the Zoom software that runs our webinars, (this is not in our control) so whenever possible, **it is recommended to attend live.**

## Course Website & Your 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 and scroll ALL the way down for the full course and assignment schedule. ***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 Email Communication:

All messages to the course coordinator should be directed through the website, by clicking on the “**participants**” link on the left side of the screen, then finding the coordinator’s name/photo and direct messaging her by clicking on **her name**, and then clicking on, “**message**” (This is a private one-on-one communication). 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 Forum on the website regularly to keep up with the course updates, student conversations and questions that might apply to you.

## **How to Login**

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."

## **Grading Criteria/Policies:**

To pass the course, you must receive at least 30 points (70% of 50) for Track 2, and 40 points (70% of 57) for Track 1. All students must also 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%). You can take each of the quizzes 2 times, and the exam 2 times with no time limit. Your highest grade will count. Students are also required to fill out the pre-course and post-course surveys.

In addition to the above, Track 1 students must also complete the following assignments in order to pass: Module 7 Discussion Question, Module 7 Feedback Response, Module 7 Quiz, and the Volunteer Application (This is a required assignment for Track 1, but not for Track 2), and one hands-on course.

Please see the number of points associated with each assignment below.

### **Assignments:**

Pre-Course Survey (required to pass) = 2 points

**Course Introduction Total =2 points**

**Discussion Questions** (1 point each x 5 questions) = **5 points**

(+1 point for Track 1 Module 7)

**Module Quizzes** (80% or better required to pass)

(5 points each x 5 quizzes) = **25 points**

(+5 points for Track 1 Module 7)

Feedback on Modules (1 point each x 5 modules) = **5 points**  
(+1 point for Track 1 Module 7)

Post-Course Survey (required to pass) =2 points

Required Sign Up (Track 1 or Track 2) =1 point

Final Exam (70% or better required to pass) = 10 points

**Course Final Assignments Total=13 points**

**Total points possible=**

50 (Track 2)

57 (Track 1)

**Total points required for (70%) =**

30 points (Track 2)

40 points (Track 1)

**Hands-On Sessions:**

This year we will offer 2, two hour long hands-on sessions on 2 Saturdays. 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, and 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 at the start of the course. This session is optional for Track 2 students, and required for all Track 1 students. If you are Track 1 and cannot attend the hands-on session please notify the instructor at least **2 weeks in advance** and provide an alternative hands-on class you will be attending. (You are responsible for finding the alternative). 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.

## **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 watch a pre-recorded lecture, do the reading, and post one discussion question prior to the live Q&A session. After the live Q&A session, you must complete both of the 2 module feedback questions by the Friday due date. For the feedback questions you are required to submit two answers, one about what you learned in the module and one that gives feedback either positive or negative to the module's instructor. Please do not comment on the course format because this feedback goes directly to the instructors who do not set up the website, manage the course format or make the schedule for the class. If you do not have something to say about what can be improved about the module's content, please comment on what you liked about the content and be specific. No credit will be given for saying, "it was great" or "no improvement needed." Instead you can say something about what part of the module you liked and why you liked it. This should be a thoughtful post that shows you have given both questions serious consideration. Please note this grading policy is firm. Please do not ask for it to be amended, or argue with the coordinator about losing points if you do not follow these directions.

## **Final Exam:**

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

## **Module Access:**

The course is set up so that each module will become available on a weekly basis every Friday at 5pm. This allows the coordinator time to work with the 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 module opening.

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

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

**Lecture and Readings due:** Every Tuesday by 11:59 pm

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

**Feedback Module & Quiz Due:** Every Friday by 11:59pm

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

All students are expected to complete a survey at the beginning of the course as well as a post course evaluation at its conclusion. The surveys will be confidential, and the information gained, including constructive criticisms, will be used to improve the course. Please note, if you miss these assignments then you will not pass the course.

## **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.

**Contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS):**

A170 Living/Learning Center

802-656-7753

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

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

**Weekly Schedule:**

**September 13-20**

**Module#1: Course Introduction, Beret Halverson**

- Friday September 13: Module 1 opens at 5pm Module opens at 5pm. All of this week's assignments are on the course website. Please do them at your own pace this week. There is no live Q&A session this week.
- Friday September 20: All intro assignments due at 11:59pm (see website)

Reading:

Read all materials on the website located in Module 1

## September 20-27

### Module #2: Introduction to Composting, Mike Ather

- Friday September 20: Module 2 opens at 5pm
- Tuesday September 24: Module 2 lecture, reading and discussion question due 11:59pm
- Thursday September 26: Live Q&A with Mike Ather, 6-7pm on Zoom
- Friday September 27: Quiz and Feedback module due, 11:59pm

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

## September 27-October 4

### Module #3: Soils Decomposition & Ecology, Wendy Sue Harper

- Friday September 27: Module 3 opens at 5pm
- Tuesday October 1: Module 2 lecture, reading and discussion question due
- Thursday October 3: Live Q&A with Wendy Sue Harper, 6-7pm on Zoom
- Friday October 4: Quiz & Feedback module due, 11:59pm

Reading:

VT Master Composter Manual:

- Chapter 5: The Biology of Compost

NY Master Composter Manual:

- Chapter 1: Soil & Decomposition Science

## **October 4-11**

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

- Friday October 4: Module 4 opens at 5pm
- Tuesday October 8: Module 4 Lecture, reading and discussion question due at 11:59pm
- Thursday October 10: Live Q&A with Mike Ather, 6-7pm on Zoom
- Friday October 11: Quiz & Feedback module due, 11:59pm

Reading:

Extension article:

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

Vermont 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

## October 11-18

### #5: Site Design & Management, Natasha Duarte & Athena Bradley

- Friday October 11: Module 5 opens, 5pm
- Tuesday October 15: Lecture, reading and discussion Question Due, 11:59pm
- Thursday October 17: Live Q&A with Natasha Duarte & Athena Bradley, 6-7pm on Zoom
- Friday October 18: Quiz & Feedback module due, 11:59pm

Reading:

NY Master Composter Manual:  
Chapter 4 Site Design & Management

## October 18-25

### #6: Vermont Act 148, Anne Bijur

- Friday October 18: Module 6 opens at 5pm
- Tuesday October 22: Lecture, reading and discussion question due at 11:59pm
- Thursday October 24: Live Q&A with Anne Bijur, 6-7pm on Zoom
- Friday October 25: Quiz & Feedback module due, 11:59pm

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 25-November 1**

**#7: Volunteering & Outreach, Beret Halverson & Cindy Heath (This module is required only for Track 1 students, but all students may participate to learn more).**

- Friday October 25: Module 7 opens at 5pm
- Tuesday October 29: Lecture, reading and discussion Question due at 11:59pm
- Thursday October 31: Live Q&A, with Beret Halverson & Cindy Heath 6-7pm on Zoom
- Friday November 1: Quiz & Feedback module due

Reading:

Vermont Master Composter Manual:

1. Chapter 17: Guidelines for Effective Communication
2. Chapter 18: Potential Questions from the Public

NY Master Composter Manual:

1. Chapter 6: Reaching and Teaching Others

## **November 1-8**

**#8: Final Assignments, Beret Halverson**

- Friday November 1: Module 8 opens, 5pm. This is a self-paced module. Finish these assignments at your own pace this week.
- Friday November 8: Final assignments due 11:59pm Final Exam & Post Course Survey (Tracks 1 & 2) & Volunteer Application (Track 1 only) due at program office.