

Course Description

Weeds are more than just an eyesore—they compete with desirable plants, disrupt garden aesthetics, and can pose ecological or safety risks. This practical, introductory course will help horticulture staff at public gardens build confidence in distinguishing weeds from desirable plants, recognizing hazardous or invasive species, and evaluating appropriate control strategies based on timing, context, and safety.

Through real-world examples, scenario-based practice, and clear guidance on tools and techniques, you'll learn how to spot common and problematic weeds, avoid common misidentifications, and apply the right control strategies at the right time. Whether you're new to the field or looking for a refresher, this course will sharpen your skills and help you make informed decisions in your day-to-day work.

Learning Objectives

After taking this course, you will be able to:

1. Define and differentiate between weeds, invasives, native, and non-native plants.
2. Distinguish dangerous or allergenic species, such as those that can cause rashes or toxic reactions in humans or harm to wildlife or zoo animals.
3. **Recognize lookalike species by applying comparative observation skills to prevent the accidental removal of desirable plants.** Recognize commonly misidentified “lookalike” weeds and avoid removing desirable plants by mistake.
4. Identify and name common types of weeds encountered in public garden settings, **which are most relevant to your site, and how to recognize them in different life stages across seasons.**
5. Describe how a weed's life cycle, **reproductive methods, and hardiness zones** can influence the timing and type of control method used.
6. Identify key considerations for evaluating whether and when chemical control may be appropriate based on garden policies and safety risks.
7. Select and properly use common mechanical, chemical, and alternative control methods for weed removal.
8. Apply appropriate safety precautions when working with hazardous plants and control methods.
9. Analyze garden scenarios and determine appropriate weed management actions based on context and best practices.
10. Communicate weed-related observations and concerns clearly with supervisors and colleagues.