



THE
CHAMPION
of TREES

Natural Areas Conservation Training (N-ACT) Program Frequently Asked Questions (and Answers)

Q: Do I have to be enrolled in the program to take classes?

A: No! You can take classes without enrolling in the N-ACT program.

Q: Can I sign up for classes one at a time or do I have to sign up for the whole program?

A: You sign up for each class individually, when it works for your schedule.

Q: Can I take any class I want right away?

A: While some classes have prerequisite skills, you can start anywhere in the program, and classes do not need to be taken in order.

Q: Will courses I take now be counted toward the certificate if I sign up later?

A: Yes! Please keep a record of your classes - you'll share that with us when you enroll.

Q: How much does it cost?

A: Students sign up on a class by class basis - an individual class costs between \$20-\$65, with discounts for Arboretum members. To complete all ten required classes plus First Aid/CPR training, plan to spend no more than \$500.

Q: When are classes offered?

A: Classes are offered all year round, with new classes released each season (winter, spring, summer, fall). Some classes (like Basic Plant ID) are offered every season, while other classes

(like Identify Woodland Wildflowers, offered in spring) are offered in the season where they are most relevant.

Q: What do I need to do to get my certificate?

A: To complete your N-ACT Certificate from the Arboretum, you need to complete 10 required courses, First Aid/CPR training (this is offered for free through the Arboretum for N-ACT participants and natural resources volunteers, but can be taken anywhere), complete 30 volunteer hours in natural areas restoration, and organize and conduct an observed volunteer day. The required classes are:

Fundamentals

- Intro to Ecological Restoration
- Basic Plant ID
- Ecosystem Concepts
- Invasive Species

Plant Identification

- Choose One: Woodland Trees, Plants of the Prairie, or Plants of Wetlands
- Site Planning for Invasive Species Management

Restoration Ecology

- Natural Areas Management
- Choose One: Woodland, Prairie, or Wetland Ecology

Applied Topics

- Tool Use for Natural Areas Management
- Volunteer Leadership
- First Aid/CPR

Volunteer Hours

- 30 hours
- One observed workday

Q: I've taken basic botany/ecology/tools training/etc. before. Do I still have to take Basic Plant ID/Ecosystem Concepts/Tools for Management/etc?

A: If you have training or relevant experience acquired in the last 10 years that might substitute for a particular class, contact the Natural Areas Conservation Training Program Coordinator at conservationtraining@mortonarb.org to see if you can apply that to a particular course or to test out of a course.

Q: How long does it take to complete the program?

A: In general, N-ACT participants can complete all of their classes within two years. Depending on your schedule, you may be able to complete the classes faster. We recommend that N-ACT participants plan to complete all of their coursework within 3 years of starting the program.

Q: Why do some courses have online components and others don't?

A: We are in the process of building out our catalog of courses that are taken partly or completely online! But there will always be some courses in our catalog that are offered only in-person, based on the instructional design for that course.

Q: What is involved with the online coursework?

A: The online courses include a combination of videos, reading, interactive material, quizzes, and material to download. They are self paced and can be done at your convenience.

Q: How much time will I be spending on a computer?

A: The computer time depends on the course and on your pace moving through course materials. Most courses include less than 2 hours of online materials.

Q: What if I don't want to take any online courses?

A: The required classes for N-ACT Certification are being offered in a blended format - they include both online and in-person components. But there are many classes in the Arboretum's education offerings, including classes on conservation and restoration topics, that are offered only in-person.

Q: What if I can't attend the in-person classes?

A: Please let us know that when you register and we'll work with you and the instructor to determine and complete appropriate make-up work for the in-person class.

Q: Can't I help support our natural areas without having to take all of these classes?

A: Yes! If you are ready to start volunteering, please check out our current volunteer opportunities by visiting mortonarb.org/ed-conservation and following the links to the volunteer office. Or contact the volunteer program at your favorite local natural area to get started.

Q: Do I need to complete all 30 volunteer hours at the Arboretum?

A: No, you can complete your volunteer hours at any site that needs volunteers to help manage its natural areas. If you volunteer at a site other than the Arboretum, please report your hours to the Natural Areas Training Program Coordinator using the [N-ACT Offsite Volunteer Hours Form](#). This form should be submitted at the end of any month where you accrue volunteer hours at sites away from the Arboretum.

Q: What if I don't have time to volunteer right now?

A: You can still start building the skills you need for restoration work by participating in classes as your schedule permits.

Q: How much time will I be outside during courses?

A: The time outside depends on the class and the conditions on the ground the day of class; you may spend from 1 to 6 hours outside.