

Pennsylvania Certified Horticulturist

Associate Fact Sheet



The following are some commonly asked questions concerning the Pennsylvania Certified Horticulturist (PCH) Associate program:

What is a Pennsylvania Certified Horticulturist (PCH) Associate?

A Pennsylvania Certified Horticulturist (PCH) Associate is a horticultural student or employee who has successfully passed an examination which tests his/her knowledge of plant health care practices, basic botany, soils and climate and plant identification. A PCH Associate must maintain certification through a program of continuing education credits to ensure his/her ongoing knowledge and expertise as a professional in the horticultural industry.

What is the difference between a PCH Associate and a professional PCH?

The PCH Associate program was created to provide an industry recognized exam to high school and career and technical school horticulture program students as requested by the PA Department of Education. The PCH Associate is tested in the "core" module professional PCH exam. The PCH Associate is a stepping stone for students and employees who have not gained the experience to pass the high level competency required by the professional PCH exam.

Who is eligible for testing?

It is strongly recommended that individuals meet one of the following criteria:

- Student enrolled in a high school or career/technical school horticulture program or
- Individuals who have been employed in the landscape or nursery industry for at least 1 year

What is the difference between a PCH Associate Student and a PCH Associate Employee?

A PCH Associate Student is assigned to a student who passes the PCH Associate exam while still enrolled in school. They can hold the designation for 4 years without the requirements of continuing education reporting. This allows them to pursue a higher education and/or obtain a position as a green industry professional and gain some experience before they are required to start attending outside educational workshops/conferences to earn CEUs.

A PCH Associate Employee is an individual who is currently employed in the green industry and has sufficient background and/or on the job training to pass the "core" module of the PCH exam. These individuals must adhere to the recertification requirements within 2 years of passing the exam.

Each has the opportunity to pursue the professional PCH designation after one year as a PCH Associate.

How do I apply?

High School Students:

PLNA is working with teachers and schools throughout Pennsylvania who are providing the PA Department of Education Applied Horticulture Program of Study (POS) to their students. All the materials related to the PCH Associate program are handled through the teachers. If you are enrolled in a horticulture program at a high school or career and technical school, please inform your teacher you are interested in the program. If they are not familiar with the program, please have them contact Cicely Elliott, Executive Director, at PLNA@PLNA.com or 717.238.1673. There is a fee of \$25.00 if a student passes the exam and wishes to use the PCH Associate designation.

College Students and Employees:

The application is available at PLNA.com to submit online or you can download a copy and submit it to our office. The application fee, available in the PLNA e-Store, will need to be provided with your application submission to complete the application process.

What do my registration fees cover? (College Students and Employees)

The application fee covers the first exam, one retest and recognition when certification is achieved. Applicants have one year from the date of application to pass the exam. Exams are proctored online via Zoom and must be set up through PLNA. For in-house proctoring inquiries, please contact Cicely Elliott, Executive Director, at PLNA@PLNA.com for more information.

College Student	PLNA Member (owner/employee of PLNA member firm)	\$ 25.00	Employee	PLNA Member (owner/employee of PLNA member firm)	\$ 50.00
	Non-member	\$ 50.00		Non-member	\$100.00

Additional retests within the one-year application period are subject to a retest fee.

PLNA Member (owner/employee of PLNA member firm)	\$ 25.00
Non-member	\$ 35.00

What is the test procedure?

The exam consists of 100 questions, and you are allotted 90 minutes to take the exam. The format of the exam consists of a combination of multiple choice, true or false, and matching questions. Applicants should have a thorough understanding of the following content areas;

Plants and Their Growth – Chapters 1 & 2

- Nomenclature
- Plant anatomy
- How plants grow and function
- Soils
- Plant nutrition
- Insects and diseases and how they affect plant behavior

Plant Maintenance – Chapter 3

- Pruning
- Fertilizing
- Turf maintenance
- Watering
- Pest control
- Mulching
- Handling nursery stock

Basic Landscape Design – Chapter 4

- Plant materials and installation
- Basic landscape design and the design process

What does it take to pass the exam?

To pass the examination, candidates must attain a score of at least 80%. If a passing score is attained, the candidate will be considered a PCH Associate. Scores will be received within one (1) week after taking the exam. Scores will NOT be given over the phone.

If the candidate does not attain the minimum passing score the candidate can retake the exam once more in the 1 year period. Additional retests within the one-year application period cost \$25.00 for PLNA members or \$35.00 for non-members.

What's the best way to prepare for the Pennsylvania Certified Horticulturist Associate Exam?

The PCH Study Manual, published by PLNA and purchasable in the PLNA e-Store, is designed to serve as a comprehensive study guide for those preparing for the certification exam, as well as a reference source for the industry. Each area of the exam is covered by the guide with additional works referenced for voluntary review. The PCH Study Manual, [available digitally as a downloadable PDF](#), is \$35.00 for PLNA members and \$60.00 for non-members.

What are the requirements to maintain the PCH Associate designation?

PCH Associate Employees must recertify every two years AND report 12 CEUs within the recertification period AND pay the required recertification fee. CEUs are earned and reported in various Educational Categories. Reminders for CEU reporting will be sent via email and regular mail. Approved Educational credit categories can be found on the PLNA website, www.PLNA.com.

PCH Associate Students will be required to pay a recertification fee of \$25.00, to keep them on the list, two years and four years after passing the exam. They will not have to earn or report CEUs during this time frame. After 4 years they will be required to start reporting CEUs in addition to paying the recertification fee to maintain their designation.

Is a PCH Associate eligible to take the PCH professional exam?

A PCH Associate is eligible to take the professional level PCH exam one year after they pass the Associate exam. The professional exam will be condensed from 3 hours (300 questions) to 2 hours (200 questions) as the Associate has already proved their knowledge in a portion of the subjects. It is not mandatory for a PCH Associate to take the professional exam. There will be a discounted rate to apply for the PCH professional exam - \$25.00 member/\$50.00 non-member.

If a **PCH Associate Employee** takes and passes the professional exam they will maintain the same recertification date and the number of required CEUs for the current recertification period will be prorated.

If a **PCH Associate Student** takes and passes the professional exam prior to their initial recertification date (4 years from passing the PCH Associate exam), their recertification date will change and they will be required to start earning/reporting CEUs immediately in accordance with the PCH Recertification guidelines.

