



Certification for Organic Land Care Professionals

The landscape industry is undergoing rapid change as it responds to a growing demand for organic practices. In order to assist the public to make an informed selection of services, SOUL provides certification for landscape professionals who have demonstrated a thorough understanding of the principles and practices of Organic Land Care.

Why is certification important?

The landscape professions have always been exceptionally competitive. Unfortunately the standard cliché that anyone with a pickup truck and a lawnmower can call themselves a landscaper certainly has been true in the past.

But times are changing; consumers are looking for safe home environments and healthy communities. They are looking for landscape professionals who have the knowledge and experience to deliver organic landscape services.

There is no better time than now to position your business at the leading edge of your profession.

As a SOUL Certified Organic Land Care Professional you truly set yourself apart:

- Certification distinguishes you as a dedicated and knowledgeable professional
- Certification awards you with a professional designation
- Certification creates peace of mind for your clients
- Certification sells your services
- Certification facilitates interaction with other knowledgeable professionals

Please note: SOUL Certified Organic Land Care Professionals are not required to commit to the exclusive practice of organic land care. However, they must sign an affidavit that they will provide organic land care according to the most current edition of the SOUL Organic Land Care Standard to clients who request organic land care services.

What does certification entail?

Individuals who wish to become certified by SOUL must fulfill these requirements.

1. Providing proof of acceptable education in each of the following areas:
 - a. Organic soil management, including composting
 - b. Organic landscape design, construction and maintenance
 - c. Plant knowledge
 - d. Site analysis
2. Passing a written examination
3. Signing an affidavit that they will provide Organic Land Care according to the most current edition of the SOUL Organic Land Care Standard to clients who request Organic Land Care services.
4. Providing proof of at least 2 years professional experience in organic horticulture
5. Applying for certification

Certification is valid for 3 years.

The Certification Process

Step 1: Complete the required education

Acceptable education includes:

- A SOUL approved Certification Preparation Course
- All organic horticulture programs offered by Gaia College
- Education in **organic** soil management received through organic agriculture organizations and colleges
- Some conventional horticulture and agriculture training in the areas of plant knowledge, landscape design and landscape construction.

Permaculture training satisfies the requirements for training in site analysis, but does not generally address all the issues commonly encountered in urban ornamental landscapes.

Other training may qualify, for example organic farming education. Please be sure to submit all relevant documentation related to your training for evaluation.

Step 2: Apply for and write the certification examination

- Fill out the Application for Examination
- Provide proof of acceptable education
- Pay the non-refundable examination fee of \$200.00 CDN
- Find a proctor at a public or private school of your choice and have him or her fill out the Proctor Agreement. You are responsible for any fees charged by your proctor.
- Submit all items to:
The Certification Committee
SOUL – Society for Organic Urban Land Care
P.O. Box 8548
Victoria, B.C., Canada
V8W 1L4

The Certification Committee will review your application.

- If the Committee finds that your prior education in organic practices is not acceptable it will make recommendations for further education. You may then re-apply to write the examination when you have completed the recommended training. You may re-apply once for free, but each additional re-application requires a full application fee.
- If the Committee finds your prior education in organic practices acceptable, you will be notified of your eligibility to write the examination, and the committee will forward the examination to your proctor.
- You will need to arrange the time to write the exam with your proctor. After you have written the exam your proctor will return it to us.

The SOUL certification exam

Areas of knowledge tested

The SOUL certification exam tests your knowledge in 10 areas:

1. Ecology
2. Botany
3. Plant Identification and Culture
4. Soil Sciences, including Drainage and Grading
5. Soil Management
6. Water Management, including Irrigation
7. Plant Maintenance
8. Landscape Installation
9. Landscape Health Management
10. Landscape Design

Exam format

The exam is composed of 200 questions. It looks like a regular multiple choice exam, but there are some significant differences:

- Each question has four **true / false** choices, and **more than one of them may be true or false**
- You will receive one point for each **correct** answer you select (correctly true, or correctly false).

In effect the exam questions are a hybrid between multiple choice and true/false questions.

You have 3 hours to complete the exam.

Passing scores

To pass the exam you must receive:

- at least 80% of the possible points **overall**, and
- at least 70% of the possible points for **each section**.

If you have achieved the overall passing score but have NOT attained the minimum 70% of possible points in any section, you must retake those sections and score a passing level.

If you have NOT achieved an overall passing score you must retake the entire exam.

Retakes

You will be allowed to retake the full or partial exam once for free, however you are responsible for the fee charged by your proctor. The fee for additional retakes is \$75.00. If you do not pass the exam within one year from the original test date you must pay another full exam fee when you retake the test.

Examination locations

You may write the examination at a school of your choice. To be able to write the exam you must find a proctor who will administer the exam to you. Acceptable proctors are public or private school principals and their delegates.

Step 3: Sign the affidavit

Once you have passed the exam you will be asked to submit the signed affidavit.

Once we have received the affidavit you will be awarded a **Certificate of Transitional Status**. Transitional Status is valid for three years, during which time you must complete all remaining certification requirements, such as:

- Any additional education as required by the SOUL education Committee. For instance, a SOUL approved Certification Preparation Course usually does not provide sufficient education in plant knowledge or composting.
- At least 2 years professional experience in organic horticulture

If you have already completed these requirements you may immediately proceed to step 5.

Step 4: Gain the required experience

To apply for certification you must have gained at least 2 years of professional organic horticulture experience. This can be in any field directly related to organic horticulture, such as landscaping, landscape design, plant propagation, education, etc.

Please note: work experience needs to be verified by another party, such as your employer, customers, etc., or confirmed by two members in good standing of the Society for Organic Urban Land Care.

Step 5: Apply for certification

- Complete the Application for Certification
- Submit the required documentation
- Pay a non-refundable application fee of \$50.00 CDN
- Submit all items to:
The Certification Committee
SOUL - Society for Organic Urban Land Care
P.O. Box 8548
Victoria, B.C., Canada
V8W 1L4

The Certification Committee will review your application.

- If the Committee finds that your education and experience in organic practices are not acceptable it will make further recommendations. You may then re-apply for certification when you have gained the recommended education and experience. You may re-apply once for free, but each additional re-application requires a full application fee.

- Upon fulfillment of all certification requirements you will be awarded with the Certificate of Certification, an ID card, and a certification logo. Only Certified Organic Land Care Professionals are permitted to use the certification logo. Certification is valid for 3 years.

Denial and revocation of certification

Certification will be denied or revoked for any of the following reasons:

- Falsification of application
- Misrepresentation
- Violation of testing procedures
- Non-acceptable education and / or experience in organic practices
- Failure to pass the examination
- Breach of the agreement signed in the Affidavit

Appeals

Denials or revocations of certification may be appealed in writing, providing detailed reasons for the appeal, to the:

Board of Directors
 Society for Organic Urban Land Care
 P.O. Box 8548
 Victoria, B.C., Canada
 V8W 1L4

Renewing certification

You can apply to renew your certification every 3 years upon submitting an Application for Renewal of Certification, together with

- The \$100.00 re-certification fee
- Proof of at least 30 hours of continuing education in organic practices in the preceding 3 years
- Proof of having made a knowledge based contribution to the public awareness of Organic Land Care, such as:
 - Workshops and other education in organic horticulture
 - Published articles on organic horticulture topics
 - Appearance in the media in support of organic horticulture
 - Contribution to SOUL's web site
 - Mentoring landscapers who are working towards certification
 - Volunteering as a SOUL Organic Master Gardener

Affidavit

I, the undersigned agree to the following:

1. That I will provide services in accordance with the most current edition of the SOUL Organic Land Care Standard to clients who request Organic Land Care Services.
2. That my certification may be revoked if I breach this agreement.

Signed:	Witnessed:
Name:	Name:
Address:	Address:
Date:	Date:

Application for Examination

Mail to:
Certification Committee
Society for Organic Urban Land Care
P.O. Box 8548
Victoria, B.C.
V8W 1L4

Application Date _____

I hereby apply to write the certification examination of the Society for Organic Urban Land Care.

Applicant's Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Fax _____ E-mail _____

Please find enclosed the following documents:

- The Proctor Agreement
- The \$200.00 examination fee
- Proof of required education

I agree to write the examination within 14 days after my proctor has received the package.

I agree to directly pay my proctor any fees he may charge for his/her services and reimburse him/her for the costs of mailing my examination.

Signed _____

Proctor Agreement

Instructions for the applicant

Please complete the information below. Then ask your proctor to complete the rest of the form, and include the completed form with your application to write the SOUL certification examination.

Applicant's Name _____

Mailing Address _____

Phone _____ Fax _____ E-mail _____

Instructions for the proctor

Please complete the following information, read and sign the agreement, and return it to the applicant.

If you have any questions please e-mail us at info@organiclandcare.org

Name _____

Occupation _____

Employer _____

Mailing Address _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Agreement:

I am a public or private school principal, or have been directly appointed by a public or private school principal to be his/her delegate to proctor this examination.

I am not a relative of the applicant, nor do I reside at the same address as the applicant.

I agree to serve as an examination proctor for the above applicant to the SOUL certification exam. The examination has been scheduled for:

Date and time _____

Location _____

I agree to:

- Treat examination materials as confidential and keep them secure at all times
- Make no copies of the examination, nor allow others to do so
- Confirm the applicant's identify through picture ID immediately prior to administering the examination
- Remain within supervisory distance of the applicant throughout the examination
- Administer the exam within the allowable time
- Ensure that the applicant does not confer with others, nor refers to reference material of any kind during the examination
- Complete the test submission form which is part of the examination package
- Mail or courier the completed examination, test submission form and all other documentation related to the examination to the address provided in the examination package
- Return all documentation within 1 day of completion of the examination
- Return all documentation within 3 weeks of receipt if the examination has not been written.

Signed _____

Name _____

Date _____

Application for Certification

Mail to:
Certification Committee
Society for Organic Urban Land Care
P.O. Box 8548
Victoria, B.C.
V8W 1L4

Application Date _____

I hereby apply for certification by the Society for Organic Urban Land Care.

Applicant's Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Fax: _____ E-mail _____

Please find enclosed the following documents:

- Certificate of Transitional Status
- A full description of my work experience
- A letter from an employer, customer or similar person of authority verifying my work experience, **OR**
- Statements by two members in good standing of the Society for Organic Urban Land Care confirming my work experience
- A cover letter outlining my reasons for seeking certification
- The \$50.00 application fee

I verify that the information submitted is correct, and agree that falsification of information can result in denial or revocation of certification.

Signed _____