

What is Certification?

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Certification is a formal recognition that an individual has met established professional standards in a specific field. It demonstrates a commitment to excellence, competency, and ethical practice. In horticultural therapy, certification validates an individual's expertise in using plants and nature-based interventions to promote health and well-being. It assures employers, clients, and the public that certified professionals have the necessary knowledge, skills, and experience to practice effectively and ethically.

Understanding Certification vs. Certificates

It is important to distinguish between professional certification and certificates of completion. The American Horticultural Therapy Association (AHTA) recognizes that educational seminars, workshops, and webinars may provide a certificate of completion, which add valuable professional education. These do not, however, equate to professional certification. A certificate from a short-term educational program signifies participation in a learning experience but does not indicate assessment of competency or adherence to professional standards. Simply calling a certificate a "certification" does not make it a true certification—it must involve a formal process of evaluation, including testing, experience verification, and adherence to ethical guidelines. True certification requires a comprehensive assessment of knowledge, skills, and professional practice to ensure competency in the field.

AHTA's Horticultural Therapist – Board Certified (HT-BC) Credential

The American Horticultural Therapy Association is launching the Horticultural Therapist – Board Certified (HT-BC) credential in 2026. This certification will set a new professional standard, ensuring that horticultural therapists meet rigorous competency and ethical requirements.

Built on a Job Task Analysis

The HT-BC certification is being developed based on a Job Task Analysis (JTA), a research-driven process that identifies the critical knowledge, skills, and abilities required for competent practice. Conducting a JTA ensures that the certification reflects real-world responsibilities and aligns with industry needs. This method is widely recognized as the gold standard for developing valid and legally defensible certifications.

Why This Matters

- Ensures Relevance – The certification is based on the actual tasks horticultural therapists perform in professional settings, making it highly applicable and meaningful.
- Supports Professional Growth – By defining key competencies, it provides a roadmap for skill development and career advancement.
- Enhances Credibility – Employers, healthcare institutions, and regulatory bodies can trust that certified individuals meet established professional standards.

The HT-BC credential will strengthen the field of horticultural therapy, ensuring that certified professionals are well-equipped to deliver high-quality, research-based therapeutic interventions.



WHY CERTIFICATION MATTERS FOR HORTICULTURAL THERAPISTS

Horticultural therapy is a growing field that bridges healthcare, social services, and horticulture to improve physical, mental, and emotional well-being. As the profession gains recognition, certification provides several key benefits:

1. Professional Credibility

Certification establishes horticultural therapists as qualified professionals with verified expertise. It distinguishes them from those without formal training, enhancing trust among employers, healthcare providers, and clients.

2. Standardization of Practice

A certification program ensures that horticultural therapists adhere to best practices and ethical guidelines. This helps maintain high-quality care and consistent outcomes across different therapeutic settings.

3. Demonstrating Expertise and Skill Development

Certification provides a structured way to showcase your knowledge and abilities in horticultural therapy. The certification process also encourages ongoing skill development, helping you refine your techniques, stay informed on best practices, and integrate new research into your work. By earning certification, you signal to employers, colleagues, and clients that you are committed to professional growth and excellence in the field.

4. Increased Public and Industry Recognition

As certification becomes the industry standard, it raises awareness of horticultural therapy as a credible and evidence-based profession. It also helps build a stronger professional community that advocates for the field.

5. Continuing Education and Growth

A certification process often includes ongoing education requirements, ensuring that professionals stay current with the latest research, techniques, and advancements in horticultural therapy.