

**The Art of Horticulture
Horticulture 2010**

We don't learn from experience; we learn from reflecting on experience.

- **John Dewey**

Fall 2011

Check out our course website: <http://www.hort.cornell.edu/art>

Instructor:

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Teaching Assistant:

Erin McKeon

Location:

Horton Lab, Ken Post Labs and Greenhouses
(Denoted on campus maps as the "green greenhouse.")
Tuesdays, 1:25 – 4:25 p.m.

What This Course Promises You

This experiential survey course offers a deep exploration into self, the classroom, and community, by engaging with the plant world in a creative context. If you are willing to diligently and intentionally invest your energy in *The Art of Horticulture*, you will learn the value of engaging in the plant world as a way to foster human and community well-being and as an outlet for creativity – an understanding that may serve you for many years to come, indeed, the rest of your life.

There are two distinct units that overlap throughout the semester: plants used in/as art, and plants as a subject of art. We will explore the ways in which plants can be used in or as art, such as living sculpture methods (including turf-works and tree sculpture, for example). We will also delve into plants used as a subject of art, and our explorations will include drawing, botanical illustration, and watercolor painting. Although these are distinct units, they will not be taught sequentially; rather, we will often integrate both approaches into each class.

You will gain a view of the plant world from a very different perspective, and an important one, given that observation and creativity are cornerstones of advancement in fields such as science. Exploring the relationship between plants and art can foster an understanding of principles of design and presentation in living forms, and offers a distinctive lens through which to view the plant world.

Learning Outcomes

Through your deep engagement in Hort 2010 you will...

- **Think about it:** identify, describe and reflect on contemporary perspectives and influences in the art and horticulture arena.
- **Look around you:** closely observe the plant world, the garden, nature, and our relationship with all of it. Notice the processes happening in the plant world and learn to perceive them

more sensitively: growth and decay, the flow of water, the changes of light and the season, and so forth.

- **Express yourself:** move outside your familiar comfort zone to engage in self-expression, and discover the ways in which for creative exploration can positively impact the way you feel.
- **Connect with others:** collaborate to produce a variety of art forms for private enjoyment and public display.
- **Make it:** figure out the “mechanics” and horticultural challenges required to create a final project, a work of art all your own.

Hort 2010 will also provide you with the opportunity to think broadly about questions such as:

- What do the changing images of horticulture in art tell us about our notions of what is beautiful or meaningful to us?
- What does horticulture in fine art tell us about the relationship of the garden and nature to the artist?
- Why/how have artists used plants and gardens as a medium for expressing themselves?
- What can we learn about plants and horticulture from the ways in which they are manipulated into various art forms?
- How can my delving into this study make me a better world citizen? How can horticultural art be employed to impact the consciousness of the public?

There are no prerequisites for this course. All studio and art-related activities and explorations will be at a beginner level. No formal art or horticulture experience is necessary for this course. It is expected that students will spend time outside of class writing reflectively, working on original art work, and investigating art-related discoveries of the plant world.

We do not address gardening. We also do not delve into most topics with particular depth. This is a survey course that is highly experiential. Any student interested in gaining a deeper understanding of any artist and his/her approach, or furthering an interest in a horticultural technique used to create art, is encouraged to do so through their final project.

How Will We Fulfill the Course Promise?

To realize the course promise, you must take responsibility for your own learning, and participate as an active learner. You will reflect considerably on your experience, and the experiences related to those we engage in during the course, through weekly writing. In addition, you will create something highly unique – hopefully, a project that will come to mean a great deal to you.

Attendance and Participation

See Class Participation Rubric for Evaluation. Given that we only meet once each week, **missing more than one class will deplete the experience and will ultimately impact your grade.** In addition, **repeated late arrivals** will also negatively impact your grade for attendance and participation. Please respect the course atmosphere by being timely, and come to class each week.

Course Format

Class will meet from 1:25 – 4:25 on Tuesdays. Often we will begin with discussion or presentation, and move to the experiential portion of the class. We will have a number of visiting artists and guests.

Course Resources

For earth art inspiration, see <http://www.greenmuseum.org>

For additional course resources, to see a gallery of student projects, and for a copy of this syllabus and all handouts, visit the course website, www.hort.cornell.edu/art

To view the Cornell Cybertower on Fine Art and Horticulture, visit <http://www.cybertower.cornell.edu> (a free registration is required).

How we will evaluate the nature and progress of your learning

- **30%: Attendance, active participation, and at course's end, a brief written self-assessment of your participation in and contribution to the class.** Missing more than one class, or being late consistently, can significantly affect your course experience, and ultimately your grade.
- **35%: Completion of reflective reading and writing assignments.**
- **35%: Creation and presentation of a final project of your choice.**

Reflective Reading and Writing

You are responsible for seven writing responses. These will be provided to you.

Reflective writing will provide the opportunity to:

- Synthesize your learnings, make connections and compare with other experiences.
- Examine and reflect on perspectives influencing contemporary perspectives in the art and horticulture arena.
- Extensively reflect on course experiences and their application to you and your interests.
- Consider what resonates with you in the readings.
- Engage in discussion with other students related to the reading and writing.

See reflective writing guidelines. I will ask your permission to share portions of your reflective writing in presentation or publication settings. Your identity would remain anonymous, and in addition, entries used would be general examples that will not in any way reveal your identity.

Final Projects

You will work on your own on a topic of interest. Each of you will provide a presentation to the class, the last day of class, and will bring your work with you – or images of your work, if you are not able to bring the project to class.

Please see **Final Project Guidelines** for details.

Supplies

We will supply all materials in class.

Materials fee

\$35, checks payable to Cornell University, due by the third week of class.

Office hours

Please arrange appointments. I will try to be available during the time that works best for you. I prefer that you send an email to let me know that you plan to come by.

Please silence cell phones and refrain from texting during class. This is a highly experiential and reflective class, and cell phone use is inappropriate. If you wish to check messages or make calls, please do so during the break.

Each student in this course is expected to abide by the **Cornell University Code of Academic Integrity**. Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student's own work. **The Code of Academic Integrity and Acknowledging the Work of Others** is found in the Policy Notebook for the Cornell Community and also on the web at:

<http://www.cornell.edu/UniversityFaculty/docs/main.html>

A word about assisting you in a stressful university atmosphere....

Stress can play havoc on even the most "together" student! Significant stress, mood changes, finding that you're worrying too much, or problems with eating and/or sleeping can interfere with your academic performance, and could be signs that you are not yourself. The source of symptoms might be largely related to your course work; if so, I invite you to speak with me (or your other professors) directly. However, problems with relationships, family worries, loss, or a personal struggle or crisis can also have a big impact in your life, and may require additional professional support.

Here at Cornell, we provide a variety of support resources, including an Academic Advising office in each college, EARS peer counseling, and Gannett's Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS). Each of these resources can help you manage personal challenges that threaten your well-being or ability to thrive at Cornell. Accessing them, especially early on, as symptoms develop, can help support your academic success as a Cornell student.

While I do not need to know the details of what is going on for you, your ability to share some of your situation with me will help me connect you with the appropriate support. I invite you to share with me, to the degree you feel comfortable, what may be happening with you, so that I can help to steer you. In the event I feel you could benefit from such support, I will express my concerns (and the reasons for them) to you and remind you of our resources.

The Course at a Glance**Week 1 (August 30):****Course overview.****Group exercises.****Jumping right in: introduction to various media used in botanical illustration.**

- Our goal will be to acquaint (or reacquaint) you with some media, with the objective of learning what is used in botanical illustration, as well as what you could use for your final project.

Week 2 (September 6):

Introduction to living sculpture

Turfworks, or “Art with Grass” with guest Dr. Frank Rossi

Overview of mowing patterns, grass art, sod furniture, and more – all to create living sculptures.

Concrete leaf casting with Erin

Week 3 (September 13):

Turfwork build – meet in front of the CCC Building on the ag quad.

Dress to get very muddy/dirty! Appropriate footwear only, please **no open-toed sandals or flipflops**. Work shoes or old sneakers are ideal. Bring work gloves if you have them.

Week 4 (September 20):

Grafting, with guest Ken Mudge

- **Meet in the Minns Garden, between Plant Science Building and Tower Rd.**
- Presentation to introduce tree sculpture.
- Learn grafting techniques that can be used to create it.

Introduce watercolor

- Basic principles of color and color mixing; brush care, papers.
- Some introductory exercises.
- Make a color chart.

Week 5 (September 27):

The Foundations of Fiber for Art

- Working with cordage.
- A visit to the Cornell Plantations

Watercolor exercises

Week 6 (October 4):

Visit to the Johnson Museum

Week 7 (October 18):

Watercolor continues

Week 10 (October 25):

Introduction to next week’s floral design session – what to expect

Sculpture in leaf

- Revival of interest in topiary
- Introduction to broad range of contemporary approaches
- Topiary project

Watercolor, continued

Week 11 (November 1):

Floral design

Bring container for floral design!

Week 8 (November 8):

Chinese brush work with guest Jim Hardesty

Week 9 (November 15):

Plant dyes: history, culture, use.

Dye studio

Bring a small item to dye (clean white socks are great)

Wear old clothes!

Week 12 (November 22):

TBA

Week 13 (November 29):

Presentation of final projects