Independent Study Guidelines
for General Horticulture,
Plants and Human Well-Being, Garden-Based Learning,
Art of Horticulture, and Citizen Science
Projects in the Department of Horticulture

Recently, we have had a number of students interested in engaging in independent study projects in the above areas in the Department of Horticulture. Based on their diverse experiences, we have created a set of general guidelines to support independent study. These guidelines are not hard and fast, but rather, offer a common approach that can be used as a framework and series of steps for students and their instructors.

1). **Project focus.** What is the focus of your independent study? Clearly articulate your goal for the coming semester. If you find that the overarching goal evolves or changes, you will need to communicate this with your instructor.

2). **Conceptual framework or approach.** Often, we find that students benefit from identifying a conceptual framework on which all of their project activity rests. The framework might be a case study approach; comparing or contrasting two different events, artists, methods, etc.; or a series of steps or exercises. Identifying a framework allows you to sift through what is necessary, and gives you “permission” to discard what isn’t. For example, a student interested in exploring approaches to garden design may feel overwhelmed by the myriad techniques offered; contrasting two approaches may provide a more manageable framework than tackling the gamut.

3). **Action steps.** What is the process through which you intend to achieve your goal? Identify the steps needed to pursue the purpose of your study.

4). **Resources.** What are the resources you intend to use to pursue your study? In many cases, resources may include, for example, interviews with people who offer a unique perspective, local agencies, or print and web-based resources.

5). **Timeline.** Considering the above, what is manageable, and what is the date, or series of deadlines, by which you will complete the study? How often do you intend to meet with the instructor?

6). **Product(s).** What will you deliver as a product of your study? It may be that you write a paper, create a web feature, develop a series of original pieces of art, or design a series of activities for youth. Whatever the product, your “deliverables” should be agreed upon in advance.

7). **Critical reflection.** Depending on the nature of your study, you and your instructor may agree that you should critically reflect on the process via a journal or other form of assessment of your experience.