



General Introductory Comments

Examiners' Comments are produced by RHS Qualifications following each examination series. These Examiners' comments are intended to help **candidates and centres to develop an** understanding of the requirements of the RHS Level 2 examinations. This is achieved through a review of candidate responses indicating key areas of strength, while also considering areas where **candidates demonstrated** weaker understanding of Topic areas or where there was evidence of gaps in their knowledge.

Candidates who scored high marks in this Level 2 examination:

- demonstrated a high level of knowledge and understanding of facts (AO1)
- could apply information and ideas (AO2)
- could discuss, and address straightforward problems (AO2)
- could demonstrate holistic/integrated knowledge of the 4 Qualification-wide outcomes and the 4 Topic areas considered in Unit 2.

Section A

Questions 1 – 20

General comments on Section A

Forced answer questions are designed to test candidate's knowledge and understanding of the concepts covered in the 4 Topics and the 4 Qualification-wide outcomes that make up **this unit**

This section was well attempted by the majority of candidates, and as with the Unit 1 examination, it was clear from annotations on the examination **papers** that many candidates were using good examination technique, discounting distractors, to end up with the correct answer to the question.

Question 3

This question, which was answered well by the majority of candidates related to the selection of plants for a border to support insect pollinators.

Candidates were required, in part a) to state three factors that would inform their choice of flowering plants for this border.

Strong candidate responses correctly stated:

- flowers having simple floral structures, or the presence of landing platforms within flowers
- flowers that have a long season, or plants that repeat flower over a season
- the selection of plants that are nectar rich
- the selection of plants that are pollen rich
- flowers that are brightly coloured
- the use of best practice to identify plants that are particularly beneficial to pollinators.

Weaker candidate responses stated:

- selected plants should be insect pollinated (which is stated in the stem of the question).

The second part of the question was not answered well by many candidates.

Question 5

This question required the candidate to explain the **term** 'tuberosity'.

Strong candidates provided detailed, correct and appropriate definitions.

Weaker candidate responses were generic, but did not provide the required level of detail for the award of both of the available marks within a Level 2 qualification.

The second part of this question required candidates to state how the tuberosity of root fragments of some plants make weed control difficult.

Strong candidate responses stressed the importance of removal of the entire root system in plants such as *Taraxacum officinale*, explaining that any root fragments left can generate new plants.

Weaker candidate responses often suggested inappropriate plant examples, for example,

Ques on 6

The first part of this ques on required candidates to state two func ons of a ha-ha in an English Landscape style garden.

This part of ques on 6 was well answered by the majority of candidates, who **correctly stated** func ons including preven on of access to the garden to livestock, while providing uninterrupted views from the garden of the countryside beyond.

The second part of ques on 6 related to a Renaissance garden, and the replacement of a low growing hedge that had been damaged by heavy snowfall and winds.

This part of ques on 6 was well answered by the majority of candidates, who correctly iden fied the factors that should be considered when selec ng woody plant species to replace the hedge as being:

- suitable** to the historical context of the garden
- resilient** to regular clipping/trimming
- appropriate to environmental condi ons
- appropriate** leaf density
- a suitable** leaf size for regular trimming
- resilient to pest and disease**

Weaker candidate responses tended to stray from the scenario stated, and sugges ng factors that would not be appropriate to the site.

The final part of the ques on required candidates to name two suitable plants for the **replacement** hedge.

Any suitable plant was accepted, common candidate responses included, , *Fagus sylvatica*, and

Question 7

This question required candidates to state two potential purposes of Citizen Science projects.

Stronger candidates were able to accurately state:

Citizen Science Projects assimilate data
engage the public /community to connect with nature.

Weaker candidate responses

Question 8

This question was challenging to many candidates with a lower number of strong candidate responses.

The question required candidates to state four stages that should be followed when developing a Biodiversity Action Plan for a Community Centre.

Most candidates were able to suggest the need to audit habitat and species, however there were significant gaps in knowledge.

Candidates who scored high marks were able to state four stages of developing a biodiversity action plan as including:

- Bring together people within the community
- Identify expertise within the community
- Audit habitat and species present on the site
- Match species and habitat from the audit to the UK Biodiversity Action Plan
- Identify threats to the habitat and species.

The second part of the question asked candidates to name two priority habitats, and two priority species named in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.

Strong candidates were able to state hedgerows, and orchards as priority habitats, with **European** hedgehogs, house sparrow, starling **and great crested** newts as priority species.

Section C

Section C candidate responses are graded against the assessment ladder, which is on the next page of this report. Candidates and centres are advised to review the ladder as this indicates how the assessment decisions are made, when grading long form responses.

Candidate performance in Section C ranges from those candidates who:

- were prepared to produce long form responses
- who carefully planned their answers, including key points
- logically approached the question
- shared their cultural knowledge that was technically correct and to the required depth of knowledge for Level 2.

through to candidates who:

- produced very short responses which did not provide the required level of depth and breadth.
- provided responses which were unplanned and unstructured
- provided responses that gave a framework, but which did not provide the required level of detail
- picked up on certain words in the question, and wrote all they know about these words, rather than answering the set question.

In addition to the assessment ladder candidate responses are also reviewed against the criteria set out below.

Indicative content

Assessment ladder (for information)

Band	Mark range	Summary	Description
	12 - 15	Fully developed (Total)	<p>A highly detailed, comprehensive, fully relevant response, addressing all aspects of the question</p> <p>No irrelevant or incorrect material or observations at the top end of the mark range: otherwise only very minor errors/omissions (which do not detract from an otherwise strong response)</p> <p>Full integration/clear links demonstrated with other appropriate topics as required: a holistic approach</p> <p>Advanced current professional horticultural knowledge/principles demonstrated (and evidence of advanced material beyond the specification at the top end of mark range)</p> <p>Consistent use of correct and appropriate technical language.</p>
	9 - 11	Mainly developed (Solid)	<p>A reasonably detailed and fairly comprehensive response, with mostly relevant observations, addressing most of the key elements of the question</p> <p>Some minor evidence of irrelevant or incorrect material or observations (in what is otherwise a good response), with occasional lack of detail/omissions at times</p> <p>Secure evidence of some appropriate integration with other topics but some linked topic areas are occasionally overlooked or incorrect associations are made: a partially holistic approach</p> <p>Current professional horticultural knowledge/principles demonstrated most of the time, with occasional errors, but largely appropriate explanations and application</p> <p>Correct and appropriate technical language demonstrated most of the time, with some minor errors.</p>
	6 - 8	Rudimentary (Basic)	<p>A largely basic response with some relevant observations, addressing some key elements of the question</p> <p>Some significant evidence of irrelevant or incorrect material and frequent lack of detail, with some key areas overlooked</p> <p>Occasional evidence of correct integration with other topics, but many areas are overlooked and incorrect associations made: l6 (n)-15.with otre.191 (t)-10 (s)8-12.1 (e)</p>

Question 1

This popular long form question required candidates to explain how named sustainable garden practices can increase biodiversity and lead to the development of food chains and webs.

Candidates who scored marks in the higher bands:

demonstrated the use of professional terminology
gave examples of food webs in the garden, commonly cited examples of food webs
included the leaf of a plant as part of a primary producer, acting as fodder for a

Question 2

This question required candidates to discuss a range of measures that a Parks Department could take to address the problems associated with vandalism.

Candidate responses to this question were varied with very few candidates discussing the root causes of the issue, stating an **-social** behaviour, along with the impacts that reduced management input in parks can have on increasing vandalism indicating gaps in candidate knowledge.

Candidates who scored marks in the higher bands discussed a range of measures to address the problems including:

- the use of friends groups

- the use of volunteers

- involving children in activity days

- inviting people into the park, with family events, for example picnics

- reducing the height of shrubs to increase visibility & encourage the use of staff in a

Question 3

This question was designed to assess the **candidate's** knowledge on seed dispersal mechanisms used by plants. Candidates were asked to apply this knowledge by discussing how the release of seed through these mechanisms **impacted** on garden maintenance.

Candidates who scored marks in the higher bands:

provided detailed responses relating to the wide range of seed dispersal mechanisms **used by plants**

Question 4

This question related to the incorporation of **sustainable** gardening practices with regards to traditional bedding displays as part of Britain in Bloom.

Candidates who scored marks in the higher bands:

- discussed the role of bedding in promoting civic pride
- discussed the ecosystem services provided by seasonal bedding
- discussed the negative environmental impacts of seasonal bedding
- suggested alternative strategies to meet the judging criteria
- suggested the use of herbaceous and woody perennials
- suggested plant selection strategies that increase biodiversity
- provided** a wide range of appropriate plant examples, using full scientific plant names
- linked their responses to best practice.

Candidates who scored marks in the lower **bands**:

- did not explain the positive benefits of bedding
- provided a framework to their answer but did not develop their points, or develop coherent arguments
- discussed tangential topics, for example the use of colour schemes
- some candidates did not appreciate the meaning of the term seasonal bedding.