

## Terms used in exam questions

It is important to start off knowing what sort of answer is required.

There is obviously no substitute for knowing the right information, but you can still know the information and not give the right answer if you haven't read the question properly.

The terms used in questions often give a guide to how much information is required. Questions asking you to 'state', 'name' and 'define' will generally need shorter answers. Questions asking you to 'explain', 'describe' or 'evaluate' will generally require longer answers.

As well as looking carefully at these terms, it is also important to look at the marks allocated to each answer. Most of the questions are in parts, with different marks for each part. For example, you may be asked for a definition for 2 marks, followed by a two descriptions for 4 marks each. This will give a guide to how much information is required for each answer.

Examples given below relate to different units and levels, so don't worry if the example appears to be something you aren't studying! For the Level 2 units, terms that are likely are 'describe', 'define', 'name', 'list', 'identify', 'state', 'compare' and 'distinguish'. Level 3 will have these terms as well, but may also have terms such as 'evaluate', 'discuss' and 'review'.

### State:

**Give the main point/s clearly and precisely.**

'State' is sometimes similar to 'list' for example, if you are asked to state 'three materials suitable for paths'.

'State' is sometimes similar to 'define', when 'state the meaning of' is asked for.

#### *Examples include:*

The meaning of the terms gamete and zygote

Benefits of shelter for fruit growing

The meaning of the term green manure

Considerations for the selection of pesticides

**Define:**

**Give a clear, precise meaning.**

Learn the important definitions for each unit you are studying.

*Examples include definitions of the terms:*

annuals, ephemerals, biennials and perennials

anion, cation

monoecious, dioecious

buffering capacity

available water content

**List:**

**Give a concise number of points/examples.**

Bullet points or numbers are useful.

*Examples include:*

- Major and minor nutrients,
- Causes of plant disorders
- Safety precautions required
- Plants for a potager

**Name:**

**A clear, simple term asking you to provide name/s.**

Include full botanical names for plants.

**Note the number asked for** – if you are asked to name 4 plants and include 5, the fifth will not be marked.

If you can't remember the full name just write the genus and it may get part of a mark; likewise for the common name. The common name may help identify a broad generic name if you cannot remember the species.

If you are just asked to 'name', you don't need to include a description as well. Some questions might however, ask you to both name and describe.

*Examples include:*

Plants suitable for acid soils

Annual weeds

Active ingredients of herbicides

Shrubs for autumn display

Types of protected structure

Examples of top/soft fruit

**Explain:**

**Make clear why something happens or why you do something.**

Lengthier answers are required providing reasons and more detail. You need to show an understanding of why something is happening or being done.

*Examples include:*

Explain the difference between organic and non-organic soil management systems.

As well as stating what the differences are, you would need to say why they are different. This would include the understanding that organic systems are based on building up soil fertility and feeding the soil rather than the plant.

How the addition of woody material affects the nitrogen availability in a soil.

As well as describing what happens, you need an understanding of the importance of the C:N ratio and the role of micro-organisms.

**Describe:**

**Make clear what is happening, how something is done or what something is like.**

Lengthier answers are required with more detail. Diagrams may be useful, e.g. for a description of a life cycle or nutrient cycle, or a type of cutting.

Diagrams should always be clear, well labelled and relevant.

*Examples include:*

How to carry out a task such as ground preparation, seed sowing, surveying, propagation. Include detail such as timing, tools or equipment used, different steps of the task.

To describe how to propagate a plant by hardwood cutting, you could include timing, material to select, tools and equipment required, method of taking cutting with a diagram as appropriate,

*Plants suitable for different situations or purposes:*

Include the characteristics of the plants such as height and spread, seasons of interest, flower and foliage colour, form, texture

*Materials for different purposes:*

Include characteristics such as durability, strength, weight and appearance.

Life cycle of a pest

Characteristics of a knot garden

Methods for weed control

Characteristics of conifers

Function of auxin

Carbon cycle

Pruning methods

**Compare:**

**Describe the similarities and differences.**

*Examples include:*

Compare liming materials.

You could list different examples and look at neutralising values, health and safety issues, volume required, and effectiveness.

Materials for plant containers

**Distinguish:**

**Point out the differences.**

*Examples include:*

Tropisms and nastic movements

Hazard and risk

**Review:**

**Give the main points in an ordered way and comment on these.**

*Examples include:*

Use of rockwool/vermiculite in horticulture

Limitations imposed on garden planning by existing services.

Design effects for grassed areas.

Methods of construction for a rock garden

**Evaluate:**

**Give advantages and disadvantages and make a judgement on these.**

This often involves comparing things, such as different materials or methods. You would give the benefits and limitations of a range of examples, looking at a range of characteristics. Give a comparison of the main points and state which is better and why.

*Examples include:*

Materials for use in a children's play area  
Use of graphic symbols for garden plans  
Contribution of containers to garden design  
Use of French drains

**Specify:**

**Mention definitely.**

Specifications are used so someone knows exactly what is done or what to get. Accuracy is necessary and there should be no vague descriptions.

*Examples include:*

Materials for paths/patios  
Depth of foundations  
Methods of construction

**Outline:**

**Give the main points in an ordered way.**

**Identify:**

**Point out and describe.**

*Examples include:*

Materials to raise and lower pH

**Assess:**

**Decide the importance of something and give reasons.**

*Examples include:*

Annual maintenance tasks

**Discuss:**

**Consider from different points of view.**

*Examples include:*

Safety considerations

Influence of different factors on garden design