



ROUND RIGHT FARM APPRENTICESHIP DESCRIPTION 2017

To farm is to believe in the miracle of birth, life and death. And to accept it all with grace.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

In its current state, the local foods movement needs more farmers. There is growing public demand for the quality and taste of locally produced foods, coupled with the recognition that current conventional farming practices lead to environmental degradation, loss of food culture and lower quality food. Small farming, with its leaner footprint, focus on quality and diversification, and access to direct-to-consumer marketing, is re-emerging as a viable alternative to the “bigger is better” mentality that still pervades agribusiness. But we still have lots of room to grow and improve our systems and numbers. Our desire to see this happen through a proliferation of ecologically responsible farms is what inspires Round Right Farm’s apprenticeship program.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Round Right Farm hires three full-season apprentices. Apprentices are provided on-farm housing for the duration of our farming season, which starts April 1st at the latest and goes through December 1st. We do not accept applicants who cannot remain through the end of the season.

Our main goal as mentors is to prepare our apprentices with the skills required to run a diversified farm and to demonstrate approaches that lead to success. By following our farming season from beginning to end, apprentices acquire the skills required to start their own farm. These include farming skills, as well as business and leadership skills. Learning takes place through a combination of hands on experience, intellectual-philosophical discussion and study.

Ideal candidates will show strong enthusiasm for food and farming, patience, persistence, consistent hard work, respect for teachers and teammates, humility, and an eagerness to put what is best for the farm and their teammates before their own personal desires. They will also view this learning environment as an investment in their future, understanding that what they

get out of the experience will be in direct proportion to their investment in and acceptance of their responsibilities. One of the best (and hardest) parts of the apprenticeship lies in the amount of responsibility that our apprentices have. Although the environment is idyllic, candidates should also understand that this is not farm camp or simply an opportunity to escape the pressures of modern life. An economically viable farm is a production environment with high paced demands and expectations.

Apprentices work Monday through Friday, approximately 50 hours/week and are assigned to basic farm chores 1 weekend per month. If the weather does not permit planting on a Monday through Friday schedule, weekend planting work will be required. Harvest of time sensitive crops may also occur on weekends.

Apprentices are also assigned specialized roles for most of the season, and these roles will often have responsibilities that lie outside the normal workday. As our goal is to give our apprentices a realistic sense of the workload on a working farm, it is important that our apprentices cultivate the ability to view the day through goals accomplished rather than hours worked.

Housing and food are provided as well as a stipend of \$350 every two weeks. One 4 day weekend vacation will be scheduled during Aug-Oct for each apprentice separately. Do not mistake this stipend as a wage for work performed; the stipend is provided to make it financially easier to attend this apprenticeship without increasing your personal debt. Take stock of your financial situation and make sure this will work for you.

Apprentice Roles on the farm

Apprentices are assigned to a leadership role in 2 of our 6 rotational veggie gardens. They start the season by laying out and planning these gardens on paper, finish the season by planting them into cover crops for the winter, and attend to all the details of vegetable production in between.

In May, apprentices are assigned to more specialized roles based on demonstrated aptitude and in consideration of the best fit for the needs of the farm. These roles are:

The Operator - Focus on equipment operation

The Nurturer - Focus on care of young plants and greenhouse/tunnel structures

The Provider - Focus on animal care and irrigation

Lessons and experiences vary over the course of the season, which offers many different opportunities to learn, practice and apply the acquired skills. What follows is a general outline of planned activities.

BASIC CALENDAR OUTLINE

March - April: PLANNING & PREPARATION

Farming Skills covered:

Garden Planning - gardening systems, bed-scale agriculture, principles of crop rotation

Greenhouse - soil block systems, germination chamber and greenhouse management, preparation of plants for transplanting, and direct seeding into the high tunnels and hoopouses

Field Preparation - basics of tractor operation and maintenance; beginning repair, hands on mechanic projects; use of tractors to manage cover crops and prepare fields for spring planting

Business Skills covered:

Financial planning - farm economics 101, cashflow accounting, seasonal projections, systems management, crop value streams

Leadership Skills covered:

Foundations of success - develop industriousness and efficiency, enthusiasm, ability to work with others

May-June: PRACTICE

Farming Skills covered:

Garden Planning - implementing the garden plan, assisting with high transplant volume, learning direct seeding, irrigation, organic pest management, garden recordkeeping

Greenhouse - soil blocking and seeding of transplants continues

Field Preparation - tractor weeding begins in earnest, continued incorporation of cover crops in preparation for planting, planting of summer cover crops

Animals - geese and cattle arrive, cattle rotation begins, goose brooding season

Harvest - harvest begins for Spring CSA, markets and wholesale clients

Pack Shed - managing for high quality produce, food safety, and efficient storage & distribution of product

Business Skills covered:

Financial Planning- expense and revenue monitoring, comparing to projections

Leadership Skills covered:

Personal & Professional Self-Management - strengthening your foundation in preparation for the peak season to come, i.e., self control (not letting emotions affect your decision making) alertness (to changing garden conditions, morale), decision-making without fear of failure, modeling efficiency, intentness and resoluteness

July- September: PERFORMANCE

Farming Skills covered:

Garden Planning - continue implementing the garden plan and manage last outside plantings & direct seedings, manage irrigation, practice organic pest management, maintain garden recordkeeping, tackle hardest season for weeds (hand weeding supplements tractor weeding)

Greenhouse - soil blocking and seeding of transplants continues and slows

Field Preparation - tractor weeding continues, continued incorporation of cover crops and planting of summer cover crops

Animals - cattle rotation, goose daily chores

Harvest - season is in full swing, with high production plants coming in, demanding 5 day a week harvests

Pack Shed- managing for high quality produce, food safety, and efficient storage & distribution of product

Business Skills covered:

Financial Planning - expense and revenue monitoring, comparing to projections

Leadership Skills covered:

Personal & Professional Management - performing to the best of your ability; heavy workload requires top mental, moral and physical condition; demonstration of learned skills and modeling self control to hourly staff; practicing team spirit by showing an eagerness to put the farm's success above your own personal success

October: REFLECTION

Farming Skills covered:

Garden Planning - last transplanting and direct seeding in tunnels, last outside weeding sweeps performed, row cover management to guard against weather conditions, weed management in tunnels, field map planning for cover crop planting

Greenhouse - soil blocking and seeding finishes

Field Preparation - finished crops turned in and incorporated, last tractor weeding completed, begin planting winter cover crops

Harvest - last major storage crops are brought in and cured, continue harvesting for fall CSA, management and inventory of storage crops

Pack Shed - managing for high quality produce, food safety, and efficient storage & distribution of product

Animals - continued cattle rotation and delivery to the butcher in October, continued goose care & butchering, management of beef shares & delivery

Business Skills covered:

Financial Planning - expense and revenue monitoring, financials of the season become more clear, future farm investment planning begins in earnest

Leadership Skills covered:

Personal & Professional Management - reflection on successes and failures of the season bring true self-confidence and poise; rough draft of self reflection essay due

November: CELEBRATION

Farming Skills covered:

Garden Planning: Row cover removed & stored for winter or discarded, tunnel management continues with row cover management

Greenhouse - prepared for the next year

Field Preparation - last of winter cover crops planted, tractors and equipment put away, or in for repairs

Harvest - slows and then ends mid November

Pack Shed - cleaned and organized for the winter

Animals- focus moves from vegetables to meats; beef comes back from the butcher, is sorted and delivered

Business Skills covered:

Financial Planning - reflecting on the season, making plans and investments for next season

Leadership Skills covered:

Personal & Professional Management - final self-reflection essay due; sources identified to assist further growth

WHAT TO BRING

Workclothes (having the proper gear is essential to making the work more comfortable)

Muck Boots --we recommend Original Muck Boots (Adult Hoser Mid model is best) \$80-\$130

Heavy Duty Rain Suit -- we recommend Coleman PVC/Nylon Rain Suit \$30-\$60 or Carhartt

Lightweight PVC Bib Overalls \$40-50

Lightweight summer footwear--sandals (like Chacos) or Sneakers work well

Plenty of warm and lightweight clothes that you don't mind getting dirty

Extra socks

Work gloves (something like the Galatia Gear Workglove)

Personal

Laptop computer (if you have one)

Two towels

Toiletries and laundry soap (free & clear)

Books (both should be read by arrival)

The Market Gardener by Jean-Martin Fortier (\$14)

The Lean Farm by Ben Hartman (\$23)

READY TO JOIN US?

Before you call Sunshine (number listed below), please answer these questions:

1. How's your driving record? If you have any previous DUI's on your record, we cannot hire you because our commercial auto plan won't cover you. Previous speeding tickets are fine, however.
2. Do you have any commitments to family or friends that could affect your ability to stay from April 1st through December 1st with us? We do not accept candidates who can't stay through the end of the season; please don't ask us to make an exception for you.
3. Are you a tobacco smoker? If yes, can you work for 4-5 hours without taking a smoke break?
4. Are you prepared to work outside in all weather conditions?

If you'd like to apply or have questions, please call Sunshine at 304-789-5887. If you don't reach me, please leave a message with the best number and time to reach you.