

Outline for CFCSA Apprentice Curriculum

Overview: The word *apprentice* can be defined as “one who is learning by practical experience under skilled workers a trade, art, or calling” (Merriam-Webster). Colchester Farm apprentices, working full-time over an 8-month season, learn the foundations of small scale, ecologically-minded Community Supported Agriculture. This education comes primarily from participation in daily tasks alongside the farmers, who welcome apprentices’ questions and curiosity and ensure that the motivation behind the work is explained to provide a more thorough understanding. This experience is supplemented by visits to other farms, adding new and valuable perspectives; and periodic classroom sessions, driven by apprentices’ interests, in which a topic is explored in further detail.

Goals: Colchester Farm apprentices will be a valued and indispensable part of the farm’s operations; will come away from the apprenticeship with a deeper understanding of small-scale, sustainable agriculture as it relates to themselves and community; and will feel confident in pursuing further applications of sustainable agriculture if they so choose.

Objectives:

I. Apprentices will develop familiarity with:

A. Raising Approx. 40 Kinds of Vegetable Crops

1. Tractor tillage using various mechanical implements
2. Planting by seed, transplant, or slip
3. Caring for growing plants by mulching, pruning, trellising, and/or covering
4. Fertilizing using organic methods (foliar feeding, side dressing)
5. Irrigation with drip tape
6. Cultivation using hand tools
7. Harvest techniques
8. Post-harvest handling requirements for various crops

B. Market Stand Management

1. Stand set-up
2. Pricing
3. Customer service
4. Record keeping

C. Safe & efficient working practices

1. Body awareness
2. Proper handling & care of tools
3. Tractor safety

II. Apprentices will gain exposure to:

A. Soil Fertility Management

1. Soil science (characteristics and chemistry)
2. Cover cropping for fertility

3. Composting
4. Organic amendments
5. Crop planning for nutrient conservation

B. Pest & Disease Management

1. Key diseases and pest groups and their damage symptoms
2. Beneficial insects and their services
3. Crop planning to prevent and/or disturb pest populations and disease
4. Non-crop plantings (companion, trap, insectaries)
5. Organic-approved controls (biological, chemical, physical)

C. Weed Management

1. Growth and dispersal characteristics of weeds
2. Beneficial use of weeds
3. Cover crops for weed suppression
4. Non-manual weeding practices (mechanical, stale bedding, flame weeding)

III. The following topics, though not an established part of the curriculum, will be addressed informally, with potential to address these more fully upon apprentices' request:

- A. Farm budgeting
- B. Sourcing supplies and equipment
- C. Crop planning & scheduling methods
- D. Creating a business plan
- E. Acquiring land

IV. Apprentices will be able to expand their horizons and put their experience into context by visiting at least 4 other farms in the region, speaking directly with the farmers.

Possible farm visits: Homestead Farms (Millington), Priapi Gardens (Cecilton), Lockbriar Farms (Chestertown), Nice Farms (American Corner), Kranz Hill Farm (Newark, DE), Coverdale Farm (Greenville, DE)

V. Apprentices will have access to a farm "library" for further reading:

- A. Periodicals (Growing for Market, Farming)
- B. Seed and Equipment Catalogs
- C. Books (from personal collections?)