

Ridgeland Harvest Apprenticeship Program

Overview

A farming apprenticeship is a hands-on learning experience, with the main objective of learning about all aspects of running our diverse farm. Please consider that farming is a way of life, not just a vocation. And by entering into this apprenticeship you are committing yourself to a way of life which demands more than most other occupations. Vegetable farming is inherently challenging – physically, mentally, emotionally, and financially. We intend this apprenticeship to be an intense, intimate, immersion experience. You will often spend the better part of six days a week with the same 3-6 people, and working intensely with our family. Our children are involved with most farm activities, so patience, humor and respect for children is strictly required. Farm work will consume the bulk of your time and energy – the basics of getting yourself clean, fed and rested will consume most of what time remains. It is important and essential to have your priorities clear.

Qualifications

- Experience growing and handling vegetables is beneficial but not required.
- Excellent verbal communication skills.
- You must work carefully and follow instructions.
- You must work quickly and enthusiastically.
- The position requires physical farm work, and you must be able to lift 50 lbs repeatedly; to bend, squat, and kneel for extended periods; and to work outdoors regardless of weather and insects.

Description

1. Full time commitment to sharing in the farm-work, May – November. An average work week is 6 days/week: Monday-Saturday. Work-hours change according to the season and the needs of the farm. A typical workday is from 7 am - 6 pm with a 1 hour lunch. Please consider that farm work is not governed by clocking in and clocking out, but by tasks that need to be completed. Apprentices receive a weekly salary of \$285 paid every two weeks.

2. Educational sessions will be held twice a month for in-depth discussion. Topics will be based upon the Apprentices needs and areas of interest and will formally be decided each month. Examples are:

- a. Market farm planning and planting for greenhouse & field
- b. Use of farm equipment and safety
- c. Perennial crop management
- d. Planning, organizing and managing a 200-300 member CSA
- e. Soil health: fertility, cover crops, weed management, tillage practices
- f. Livestock and pasture management for poultry, hogs and cattle
- g. Crop health: irrigation, pest and disease control, crop rotation
- h. Post-harvest handling of vegetables and packing shed coordination
- i. Harvest planning: crop scouting, yield estimates

Additionally, each apprentice will be required to manage one aspect of the farm that will be mutually decided upon.

3. Planning meetings are held once a week to determine the weekly schedule where apprentices will be involved in some of the management decisions.

4. Meals are primarily on your own, except 5 shared meals per week typically lunches. Because we believe it is important to use and eat the food we grow, apprentices will be involved in weekly food preparation as well as preservation. They will be required to cook one meal per week for 4-6 people.

5. Apprentices are expected to participate in on-farm tours and events. Several visits to other local farms will be arranged, once the farmers and apprentice discuss other areas of interest (i.e. mushroom, apiary, fruit production, etc.)

6. Housing is rustic: screened in platform tent with a two-burner propane stove, and a wood stove. Refrigeration will be available. A shared bathroom/shower with electricity and running water is accessible at the packing shed; laundry facilities at the farmhouse.

7. Additional rules/policies for the apprenticeship program will be supplied once accepted.

Surrounding Area

Ridgeland Harvest is located in the beautiful hills of the Driftless area of southwestern Wisconsin. Our farm overlooks the valleys, with a gentle breeze always blowing on our ridge top farm. We are 12-miles from the nearest town, Viroqua, a small but hip town with good music, food, art and conversation. Nearby rivers and parks are accessible for hiking, canoeing and kayaking. Curving country roads provide nice scenery for jogging or biking.

How to apply

If you think that Ridgeland Harvest may be a good fit for you than we encourage you to apply. Please supply us with the following information as soon as possible. After we review your information, we will contact you to set up an interview.

1. Please write a letter of interest addressing the following questions:
 - a. Why do you want to farm?
 - b. Please tell us about any gardening or farm related experience.
 - c. What do you hope to learn from working here?
 - d. Any special considerations we should know about (diet, health)?
 - f. Do you have any other related work experiences or skills? (Example: carpentry, cooking, writing)
2. Please include a work history (last 3 employers)
3. Please provide 3 references
4. Submit by email: rharvest@mwt.net or
Ridgeland Harvest, E5538 Nelson Road, Viroqua, WI 54665