



# Willow Creek Farm Preserve

## Cultivating a Healthy Community

### Apprentice Program Overview 2019

The **Apprenticeship Program** at Willow Creek Farm Preserve (WCFP) is an educational program focusing on practical training in organic small-scale farming and gardening, with an emphasis on the dynamic connections between food and the environment.

The nine-month Apprenticeship Program offers instruction and daily hands-on experience-concentrating on the ecological interactions amongst plants, soils, animals, climate, insects, and pathogens. Apprentices work alongside staff members of WCFP on our 135-acre farm in the orchards, fields and raised bed garden. Apprentices spend a small percentage of each week in a classroom setting and will also complete self-study assignments. In addition, apprentices participate in the *Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training (CRAFT)*<sup>1</sup> program and attend up to four farm tours and educational events within Southeastern, Pennsylvania, overseen by *Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture (PASA)*. The Apprenticeship Program highlights the following six aspects of WCFP: Tree Fruit, Small Fruit, Blueberries and Brambles, Sheep, Raised Bed Vegetable Production and Cover Crops.

Examples of daily activities include bed preparation, transplanting, seed sowing, watering, weeding, thinning, composting, harvesting, produce handling, animal care, pruning, orchard IPM duties, U-pick oversight, etc. Rotational positions of responsibility may include cleaning, mowing, watering, etc. and may require different and/or longer hours.

#### **Apprenticeship Overview:**

The **WCFP Apprenticeship** Curriculum creates a foundation for learning basic organic farming skills and knowledge needed to succeed as a farmer.

#### **Introduction to Basics of Organic Farming**

- Conventional vs organic farming. What's organic?
- Planning the season. It all starts with a plan.
- Soil management. The heart of organic.
- Integrated Pest Management (IPM) in production. A tool for organic farming.
- Pests, weeds, and diseases in organic production. Back to biology class.

#### **Transitioning to Certified Organic**

- Requirements for Organic certification.
- Learning about Organic system planning.
- Record Keeping.
- Marketing.
- Selling organic products.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://pasafarming.org/qa-what-is-craft/>



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### **Comprehensive Hands-On Training in Conservation Agricultural Practices and Organic Production Management**

- Season timeline: planning and prioritizing.
- Diversity and holistic approach.
- Composting.
- Pollinators, companion plants, intercropping, and crop rotation.
- Soil improvement: The beauty of cover crops.

### **Introduction to Fruit Tree Production**

- Land preparation.
- Root stock considerations.
- Planting techniques.
- Holistic management: weeds, fungi, pests, and soil.
- Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter care.

### **Introduction to Organic Blueberries and Brambles**

- Variety and cultivar selection.
- Weed management.
- Diseases management.
- Soil care.
- Pruning/plant care.

### **Benefits of Sheep in an Orchard**

- Introduction to Raising Sheep.
- Pasture rotation.
- Adding cover crops.
- Choosing a breed and fleece management.
- Handling and nutritional needs of sheep.

### **Raised Bed Vegetable Production – Seed to Share Garden™**

- Introduction and unique considerations for raised bed vegetable production.
- Soil amendments required.
- Intercropping and maximizing space.
- Cover crop for raised beds.
- Additional important factors: irrigation, trellis, frames, etc.

### **Introduction to Cover Crops**

- Choosing the right cover crop.
- Biannual cover crops.
- Cover crop by season.



# Willow Creek Farm Preserve

## Cultivating a Healthy Community

- Cover crop for feeding livestock.
- No-till vs. tilling.

### Introduction to Business Planning

- Why a business plan?
- Steps to a business plan.
- Market research.
- Business in action.
- Evaluation and adapting to change.

### Introduction to Governmental Considerations

- United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)/Federal Considerations
- Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Programs – Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP), etc.
- Local Municipal Considerations
- Farm Legal Issues.

### Apprenticeship Details:

#### **Time Commitment:**

Beginning of March, 2019 through the end of November, 2019; Full Nine-month commitment required.

#### **Schedule:**

Apprentices work full-time Monday through Saturday (40-45+ hours a week) with variable days off. Apprentices will also need to be available on a rotating basis for watering and livestock duties on Sundays. The farm schedule is generally from 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM Monday through Saturday (although days may start as early as 7:30 AM or as late as 8:30 AM depending on weather and harvest needs). Apprentices are expected to participate fully in the program by being available for those hours every day.

#### **Compensation: Paid bi-weekly**

<b>Compensation</b>	<b>With Housing</b>
\$425/week salary	Deduct \$100/week

#### **Time Off:**

- 3 days Paid Time Off (PTO)
- 4 Paid Holidays
 

Good Friday	Friday before Easter
Memorial Day	Last Monday May
Independence Day	July 4th
Labor Day	First Monday September
- 3 days Unpaid Time Off



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## Cultivating a Healthy Community

### **Housing:**

One critical element of the Apprenticeship is the immersion learning made possible by a full-time residential program. Apprentices are given the option of living at the Farm in a furnished farmhouse.

**Reports To:** Farm Manager/Farm Education Manager

### **Qualifications:**

- Genuine interest in organic agricultural production, with the intention to continue a career in food or agriculture post-apprenticeship.
- Strong physical and mental work ethic.
- Responsible and internally motivated to learn and improve one's skillset and knowledgebase.
- Demonstrated ability to collaborate and work well with others, including co-workers and the public.
- Prior agricultural experience is not required, although any work or study in the field of food or agriculture is a desirable attribute to apprenticeship applicants.
- Must be 21+ years of age.
- Must pass a Background Check.
- Valid Driver's License.

### **Physical Requirements:**

- Lift or move up to 50lbs, unassisted.
- Carry, bend, kneel, and stand for long periods of time.
- Work outdoors in all weather conditions.

### **Interested applicants, please submit the following materials:**

- Complete our online application at [www.willowcreekfarmpreserve.org](http://www.willowcreekfarmpreserve.org) and email your resume to [Melissa.smith@willowcreekfarmpreserve.org](mailto:Melissa.smith@willowcreekfarmpreserve.org)