

APPLICATION FOR FARM APPRENTICESHIP

CENTER FOR AGRICULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP  
ACCOKEEK FOUNDATION - RWS ECOSYSTEM FARM  
3400 BRYAN POINT ROAD  
ACCOKEEK, MD 20607

The apprenticeship position is one of work-exchange. That is, work in exchange for knowledge and experience. Apprentices are asked to commit to a full, arranged term; to pay attention to detail, complete tasks, and keep records; to report to a farmer for instruction, observation, and direction; to articulate observations, curiosities, and needs. Above all, to enjoy what we do, keeping a positive attitude and a sense of humor, curiosity and goodwill.

Name:

Date:

Current Address:

Permanent Address:

Phone: Day:

Evening:

Email:

Education: Completed High School?  
Degrees completed:

Years of college:

Rate your physical condition:

Excellent

Good

Fair

Poor

Do you have any allergies?

Asthma?

If yes, what are you allergic to?

(Note: There is poison ivy as well as stinging and biting insects around the Farm.)

We must often lift and move items that weigh 50 pounds (e.g., feed sacks and seed bags). For any reason, can you not lift and carry 50 lbs.?

We often must bend, stretch, lift, haul, and carry out any number of physically demanding tasks repeatedly during each workday. Is there any reason that you would not be able to perform such repetitive and physically demanding tasks?

Do you have a valid and current driver's license?

Can you drive a vehicle with standard (manual) transmission?

Please answer the following questions. Use as much space as necessary.

1. Please list and briefly describe any previous farm/gardening work that you have done.
2. Please describe the investments you have made in the last two years to further your career in farming (e.g., tools, machinery, books, memberships, training programs and conferences).

3. Please describe any management experience or skills that you have.
4. Describe your physical condition (i.e., strength, flexibility, endurance, diet).
5. There are some days when weather conditions, harvest pressure, machinery breakdowns, labor shortages or some other unexpected events cause us to work long and hard without stopping. Are you willing and capable of performing physically strenuous work for long hours with few breaks for food and rest?
6. Please describe your work ethic.
7. Please describe your environmental ethic.
8. Please describe a difficult physical and/or emotional challenge you have encountered and describe how you dealt with it.
9. Please describe your learning style. Include your strengths and weaknesses as a student, and about a favorite learning experience.
10. What, if any, types of physically demanding jobs or athletic activities have you done in the past.
11. Apprentices are given explicit instruction and directions for the various work tasks. Accordingly, they are expected to carry out the tasks as instructed to the best of their ability. Apprentices are expected to do each task well, thoroughly, and – with practice – quickly. Is there any reason that you would find this expectation difficult?
12. Describe your willingness and ability to withstand and endure work (preferably without complaining) in high heat and humidity, rain, cold and windy conditions.

Please note that those who are hired are expected to arrive with rain gear, rubber mud boots, sturdy work boots, and a sufficient supply of both warm-weather and cold-weather clothing. We give each apprentice one pair of leather and cotton work gloves, and provide dust masks, ear and eye protection when needed.

13. If hired, are you prepared and willing to purchase clothing and footwear suitable for durability, safety and comfort (i.e. rain gear - top and bottom, sturdy work boots, warm winter clothing, mud boots)?

Please note that maintaining a daily journal, submitting a bi-weekly time sheet, and reading and writing assignments are **required components** of the program.

14. Are you willing to spend some non-fieldwork time reading, studying and completing written requirements?
15. We are always looking for ways to creatively improve our farm, and encourage apprentices to take on small and large projects to help us do so - and to share them with the farm and the others who work here. Our scheduled work, it should be noted, is prioritized in the busy season, and these projects should fit within the overall vision of our own farm project. That said, we like and support these efforts. Do you have particular areas of skill or interest that you feel comfortable sharing with us?

Please consider that farming is challenging—physically, mentally, emotionally, and financially. This apprenticeship experience is an **intense, intimate, immersion experience**. You will often spend the better part of five to six days a week with the same 3-4 people for up to 10-12 hours/day. Farm work will consume the bulk of your time and energy—the basics of getting yourself clean, fed and rested will consume most of whatever remains. It is important and essential to have your priorities clear. Those who come here with the singular focus to increase stamina, knowledge, skills, experience and confidence to someday be able to farm will likely benefit most from this program.

It is imperative that apprentices are well rested and physically as well as mentally prepared for each workday. An apprentice “dragging” from a previous night’s excesses can alter the effectiveness and morale of the entire team. Therefore, “clubbing,” “partying,” and late-nights are strongly discouraged before workdays. This may seem obvious, but it deserves to be mentioned.

16. All of this considered, are you willing to put work and learning first while participating in this program?
17.  
Working certain weekends is both a responsibility and an opportunity to be at the farm in solitude.
18. Are you willing to work weekends on a rotating basis with the rest of us?
19. A personal skills assessment:

This is a tool to evaluate your own experience in many farming related activities. Using the scale to the right, please rate your experience with the following farm and gardening related tools, machinery and operations. Note: this is not an entry evaluation - greater experience level in any or all of these does not guarantee hiring, nor does a lack of experience preclude it. This is simply an informative assessment.

- |  | Less than   | More than                   |
|--|-------------|-----------------------------|
|  | <u>None</u> | <u>10 hrs</u> <u>10 hrs</u> |
| a. gardening hand tools<br>(spades, forks, rakes, shovels, hoes, etc.) |             |                             |

- b. lawn and garden power equipment  
(lawn mowers, rototillers, garden tractors)
- c. carpentry hand tools  
(hammers, saws, squares, etc.)
- d. carpentry power tools  
(cordless drills, electric saws, etc.)
- e. mechanics tools  
(e.g., socket wrenches)
- f. chain saw
- g. auto and machinery mechanics and maintenance
- h. small tractor operation (up to 30 hp)
- i. Larger tractor operation (over 30 hp)
- j. front-end loader operation
- k. skid-steer loader operation
- l. pest control  
(chemical/organic sprays, cultural practices)
- m. gardening and/or field crop planning
- n. seed orders
- o. record-keeping
- p. weed control
  - hand weeding
  - mechanical/tractor cultivation
- q. mulching
- r. compost making
- s. use of farm machinery
  - moldboard plow
  - disc harrow
  - spader
  - rototiller
  - cultivators
  - transplanter
  - haying equipment
  - compost/manure spreader
- t. irrigation systems
  - installation and set-up
  - maintenance
  - trickle
  - overhead
- u. greenhouse operations
- v. seedling production
- w. seed saving
- x. harvest experience
- y. prepping experience
- z. markets  
(e.g., CSA, farmers' markets, wholesale, farmstand, etc.)
- aa. animal care
- bb. small fruit production
- cc. tree fruit production
- dd. cut flower production
- ee. business planning
- ff. bookkeeping and record keeping
- gg. marketing

- hh. permaculture or ecological design
- ii. natural building

20. What do you hope to gain from this apprenticeship experience?

21. Are there any other things that you would like us to know about you, or anything else that you wish to comment on.

The premise of the first year is that you will learn how to grow and market food by working through a full season. An assistant manager position is possible after the first season, which provides additional responsibilities as well as the opportunity to pursue research or entrepreneurial projects on up to one-half acre of land. After completion of one or more seasons, local land acquisition can be facilitated through the program.

22. Are you currently interested in staying for more than one year?

This is obviously a detailed application, thank you for completing it. If you are serious about a career in farming, we offer you a unique opportunity to do the work of a full growing season and to compliment that work with formal and informal instruction. The end goal, of course, is for you to feel confident that you can farm – and that you will be closer to making your own farm a reality.

While the program is certainly serious in intent, we also aim to have fun. The goal is to have all of us working from the “same page” efficiently and effectively. In that way, the day-to-day rhythm becomes more enjoyable for all.

Please attach a resume and three references, two of which are former work supervisors, with their contact information (phone, email, address) and their relationship to you. Candidates are strongly encouraged to be available for an on-site interview. Send all materials – and questions - by snail or e-mail to:

Mike Snow  
RWS Ecosystem Farm at the Accokeek Foundation  
3400 Bryan Point Road  
Accokeek, Maryland 20607

[msnow@accokeek.org](mailto:msnow@accokeek.org)