



Guide for Colchester Farm CSA Apprentices 2012 Season

About Colchester Farm CSA

Colchester Farm Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) / (CFCSA) has been in operation since 2003. The CFCSA leases 10 acres of land from Colchester Farm LLC, which is located on the Sassafras River, a tributary of the Chesapeake Bay, in Kent County Maryland. The CFCSA project produces a wide range of vegetables, herbs, flowers, and fruit for approximately 150 shareholders (families, individuals, or businesses), a local farmer's market, and local restaurants.

The CSA is a non-profit 501c(3) tax-exempt organization, with the following mission:

“CFCSA is a community-based organization that grows pesticide-free vegetables, provides wholesome food, and offers education on sustainable agriculture to its members and surrounding communities. It strives to be an alternative model of farming, dedicated to maintaining the agricultural heritage of the Eastern Shore of Maryland.”

Farm operations are carried out by one full-time manager, one advanced apprentice or assistant manager, three full-season apprentices (working April through November), and by some volunteers and individuals or families participating in our work share program.

Colchester Farm CSA has employed CSA Manager Theresa Mycek since 2005, initially hired as Assistant Manager to Andy Andrews, founder of the CSA. She was hired as CSA manager for the 2006 season.

Apprenticeship Program at Colchester Farm CSA

Program overview, field work philosophy and work ethic

An apprenticeship at Colchester Farm CSA is an opportunity to gain hands-on experience in sustainable vegetable production and the marketing of produce through a Community Supported Agriculture project. We welcome applications for the apprenticeship from hard-working individuals from diverse backgrounds; the apprenticeship is designed for individuals with a serious interest in gaining the skills necessary to farm,

though prior farming experience is not necessarily required. Anyone with a serious interest in agriculture and the physical ability to work the long hours of a farming schedule will be considered.

CFCSA is a working/learning farm. Most of an apprentice's time is spent producing vegetables (planting, seeding, weeding, hoeing, harvesting, washing, and packing) alongside the CSA manager and assistant manager. Apprentices learn by doing; fieldwork is the core educational component of the apprenticeship. Although CFCSA is a non-profit organization, we rely on farm income to sustain the CSA and we consider our apprentices an integral and indispensable component of this operation. Thus, we prioritize providing apprentices instruction and a working knowledge of all farm tasks. In return, apprentices are expected to contribute their labor to accomplish farm work, taking on greater responsibility as they learn.

Apprentices are expected to be in good health and capable of performing physically demanding tasks. One must be able to stand and kneel for long periods of time, walk and move briskly, bend repeatedly, and lift heavy objects. The work is reliably physically demanding. It is our shared labor and commitment to the work at hand that sustains us in the field. Open communication, respect for one another, and mutual cooperation is essential to accomplishing our many tasks.

Application Procedure

If you're interested in applying for an apprenticeship at Colchester Farm CSA, please make sure you read the remainder of the apprentice guide below, which explains the apprenticeship program in greater detail and outlines program policy and what is expected of apprentices. To apply, please submit a resume with references and a cover letter describing your interest in an apprenticeship at Colchester Farm CSA. Though applicants are not required to visit the farm to be considered for employment, a farm visit is strongly encouraged. To arrange a visit, contact Theresa Mycek at manager@colchesterfarm.org or 443-282-1409.

Apprentice Work Responsibilities

Preparation for fieldwork

Think ahead to the equipment and tools you need before going out into the field to work. Always bring water with you and wear proper clothing for the weather (cold/heat/rain/sun). Frequent or lengthy breaks hinder good teamwork and slow the completion of tasks.

Being on time

We require all staff to be on time and fully prepared for work, at the designated start time in the morning *and* after lunch. In the morning, it is important that all staff is present to discuss the plan for the day, to receive instruction, and ask questions. We often need to reconvene after lunch before starting work in the field to reassess our work plans.

Handling tools/equipment

Always put a tool back where you found it. Be conscious of the act of putting a tool down. It is easy to set tools down in the field and forget about them. You are held accountable for the tools you use.

Footwear and protection from the weather

Apprentices are responsible for proper footwear (boots with a heavy sole, suitable for using shovels, digging forks, etc.), and that provide some protection from using sharp tools and heavy equipment), clothing, hats, sun protection, rain gear, and cold weather gear. We will provide work gloves, safety glasses, ear protection, and safety masks.

Tractor operation

We use a small tractor with a hydraulic three point hitch and bucket for many farm tasks, including various types of tillage and bed preparation, plastic mulch laying, transplanting,

mowing, cultivation, and turning compost. Apprentices are given the opportunity to be trained in the use of the tractor and tractor implements. Safe tractor operation is critical.

Farm vehicles

Farm vehicles (tractor and pick-up trucks) are only to be used for farm business and are not to be driven by anyone who is not an employee of the farm. A valid driver's license is a requirement to drive the farm trucks.

Board meetings

CFCSA is a non-profit organization with a board of directors that makes certain decisions about the business of the farm. Apprentices are encouraged, although not required, to attend board and other committee meetings.

Farming Tasks

- **Planting and cultivation:** A majority of the apprentice's time will be spent in the field performing tasks such as transplanting, seeding, hoeing, hand-weeding, mulching, trellising, insect management, and general field and equipment maintenance and management.
- **Greenhouse Management:** Apprentices will learn and be involved in monitoring of the plants growing in the greenhouse and high tunnel, which involves regulating temperature, mixing potting soil, seeding for transplants, watering, disease/pest detection and control, and fertilizing.
- **Composting:** Responsibilities include building and monitoring the compost pile, turning it by tractor, and utilization of compost.
- **Irrigation:** Apprentices will participate in setting up (and taking down), maintaining/repairing, and monitoring the drip irrigation system.
- **Harvest day activities:** Responsibilities include learning appropriate harvest stage/size, handling and storage of various crops during harvest and post-harvest, washing, quality control, and packaging of produce for CSA distribution or farmers market sale.
- **Farmers market sales and CSA distribution:** Apprentices greet and interact with shareholders and customers, maintain the vegetable display, take inventory, store and transport produce properly, and complete proper clean up and storage procedures following a market or pick-up.
- **Interaction with CSA shareholders, farm market customers, and volunteers:** All employees are expected to be professional and helpful to all visitors to the farm, shareholders or otherwise, and to our farm market customers. We depend on our shareholders (and prospective shareholders) for our livelihood and we value positive interaction and communication with our local community members.

Work Schedule/Time Requirements

Apprentices work at least five days per week, usually more than forty hours. During the CSA season, two days per week are "harvest days" and three days are dedicated to completing fieldwork. The usual schedule is as follows:

- 8am-5pm Mon-Fri March – May and October – December
- 7am-4pm Mon-Fri End of May-September
- One hour lunch, generally 12-1pm

During the CSA season, mid-to-late May through mid-to-late November, apprentices will be expected to work one "pick-up" day per week (either Tuesday or Friday). Members may pick-up their produce as late as 6pm, and we work until we are finished, often until 7pm, or later if necessary.

We sell produce at the Chestertown farmers market and Kent Island farmers' market from mid-April through mid-December. All staff rotates working market days. The Chestertown market runs from 8am-12pm and time commitment on market days is usually 7am-1:30pm, or until all tasks are completed. When staff works a Saturday market day, they receive the following Monday off. The Kent Island market runs on Thursdays 3:30pm- 6:30pm and required time commitment is usually 1:30pm-8:30pm.

Staff meeting and field walk will be held first-thing Monday morning.

Full-season apprentice(s) will receive the opportunity to take up to five days off. Requests for time off must be made in advance, and requires approval by the CSA manager. Preferably, requests for time off will be made during the application process. We will not work on the following holidays: Martin Luther King Day – January 16 (Monday), Memorial Day – May 28 (Monday), Independence Day – July 4 (Wednesday), Labor Day – September 3 (Monday), Thanksgiving and the Friday afterward – November 22 and 23.

If you are sick, please don't work and notify the CSA manager as soon as you are aware. If you miss more than one week of work during the season due to illness, or if your health is impacting your work performance, the manager will review the situation with you. You are not required to make up work for sick days.

Compensation

Apprentices are offered a stipend, housing, and access to farm produce.

We offer a stipend of \$400 paid every other week on Friday. Taxes and other withholdings are deducted from the stipend.

The farm provides housing on the farm at no cost to the apprentice. Kitchen facilities, bathrooms, and a general living space will be shared. Apprentices will have their own rooms.

An apprentice may take as much produce from the farm as they can personally consume. Apprentices may either harvest produce from the field on their own time, or can take what is leftover following a pick-up or market, in coordination with other apprentices and farm staff. For food preservation purposes, apprentices may only take produce when there is surplus; please coordinate preserving activities with the farm manager so surplus is evenly distributed. Food can be harvested for friends or family, within reason, with approval from the farm manager.

Housing Guidelines and Visitor Policy

All apprentices are responsible for the care and clean appearance of housing facilities and the surrounding yard. It is a shared space, and thus inhabitants must respect each other's space. Occupants decide, as a group, how they will maintain the objective of creating a clean, comfortable and safe living environment. Management is always willing to discuss any concerns apprentices have about housing.

The CSA welcomes visitors to the farm, and your guests are welcome to help with fieldwork, but please check in first and give the manager advance notice of expected visitors.

If apprentices wish to use a computer or telephone for personal use, they must provide their own devices. Wireless internet service is provided at the farm.

Apprentices are asked to leave their pets at home.

Program Orientation

During the first week of the apprenticeship, farm staff will review farm operations and geography, safety and personnel policies, rotating chores, work expectations, housing expectations, and other details as necessary.

Other Personnel Policies and Procedures

- **Problem Resolution:** Any employment-related problems or difficulties should be brought to the attention of the CSA manager at any time and preferably as soon as you recognize it (hopefully while it is only a potential problem). If the manager cannot satisfactorily address the problem raised, the issue can be brought to the attention of the CSA Vice President.
- **Evaluations:** mid season and final apprenticeship evaluation. Apprentices will be given feedback and asked to provide feedback of CFCSA regarding their apprentice experience.

Apprenticeship work agreement

This guide to the apprenticeship at Colchester Farm CSA also constitutes the apprentice work agreement. Apprentices must sign and date this document, agreeing to the terms of employment outlined above, and agreeing to a specified term of employment if necessary.

I have read the “Guide for Colchester Farm CSA Apprentices” above, and agree to the terms of the apprenticeship as described.

Apprentice Signature

Date

Employment Period

CSA Manager Signature

Date