

ALM Organic Farm (home of Full Circle Seeds) is a thriving 15-acre certified farm in Sooke BC located on a heritage farmstead. The farm produces a variety of vegetables, fruit and seed growing for farmers markets, restaurants and a box program and has been in operation since 1990. The apprenticeship program is for individuals with a serious interest in gaining the skills necessary to grow food for market or those who are interested in exploring farming as a career.

What you will get from an apprenticeship at our farm?

The apprenticeship program is a symbiotic relationship between the apprentice and the farm; with full immersion in a season of farming and the integration of a key part of our team and farm system. Apprentices will have hands-on opportunities to learn all aspects of how to grow a large variety of vegetables, herbs and flowers and seeds including

- Overseeing a crop from seeding to harvest
- Managing a major field, greenhouse and seed crop
- Seed saving and processing
- Calendaring
- Marketing to CSA, restaurants, farmers markets
- Harvesting methods and systems
- Recordkeeping
- Crop rotation
- Compost building
- Irrigation methods

Apprentices receive lots of support learning how to manage these tasks and be involved with much of the overall planning of the farm as well as the nuts and bolts of certification, accounting, etc. The time is organized by weekly walkabouts, daily, weekly and monthly task lists, and work on both an individual and collaborative level as well as monthly apprentice enrichment days at neighbouring farms.

What can you expect in terms of instruction and training?

Teaching is strongly hand-on, structured around building a knowledge base and confidence as apprentices undertake an area seeing it through seeding to harvest. As the season progresses more responsibility is given and skills and training are further developed. Farm walkabout occur as a group monthly to look at crops, talk about plans, make harvest lists, etc. On a daily basis our group lunch is a very important time for the team to communicate with general farm discussions as well as occasional bigger discussions on topics such as crop rotation; certification and both farm expenses and income. Print and online resources are available to supplement field training and occasional visits to other farms provide meaningful exchanges and experiences.

What will you receive in return?

Apprentices will receive an excellent, well-rounded education in small-scale organic farming. Apprenticeships are considered to be a volunteer position but we offer a stipend to apprentices to help offset expenses. Accommodations are available in the farmhouse shared with other farm residents/employees or the cob house (smoking not permitted indoors). Apprentices keep their own living areas clean and participate in communal area chores. Internet, long distance telephone plan, laundry facilities are available for use. We purchase organic bulk food staples plus there is always a variety of produce from the farm for farm use. In addition, apprentices are given a \$100 monthly food allowance and are responsible for providing their own breakfast and dinner. We have lunch together on weekdays and each take a turn cooking lunch for the group. This routine is a daily touchstone for dialogue, planning and cementing our group dynamics. We eat vegetables and fruit from the farm, locally grown/harvested fish and meat, our own eggs and we have a pantry full of bulk ordered organic rice, beans, etc. Because of the format of shared lunches, we have found it difficult to accommodate vegans, vegetarians and gluten free diets.

What will be expected of you?

We look for highly motivated individuals who are serious about wanting to learn and live the reality of farming. While previous experience in the field of agriculture is an asset, it's not necessarily required. Apprentices need to be hard-working, dedicated, organized, responsible, and adaptable individuals with a strong work ethic able to work in a team as well as being comfortable working alone and being self-motivated. You will be expected to become more and more efficient and responsible for various aspects of the farm and learn to juggle multiple demands as part of daily life on the farm. The work is diverse but can be stressful because there is always more work to do than time to do it, particularly in the spring during planting season. Our typical workweek is 40-50 hours, five days per week, with one-two rotations per month at the Saturday farmers' market. We usually work from 9 am until 5 or 6 pm, taking long lunch together every day. Harvest days (Tuesdays and Fridays) during the summer are often longer.

Interested?

Download our application through our website [here](#) and send an email our way. All applicants will be contacted and those deemed a good fit will be contacted to set up a visit to the farm and/or Skype or phone interview. We also start each apprenticeship with a two-week trial period at the end of which we will review and sign a contract for the rest of the season.