Biocultural Conservation Farm – 2024-2025 Farm Apprenticeship

POSITION DESCRIPTION

Oak Spring Garden Foundation is now accepting applications for one full-time seasonal farm apprentice to work on our Biocultural Conservation Farm. This positions will begin fall of 2024, preferably starting in August-October, and will go until December 2025. Interested applicants are encouraged to apply early as we are seeking to fill this position quickly.

The selected individuals will work at the Oak Spring Garden Foundation’s Biocultural Conservation Farm (BCCF) to assist with the production of vegetables to be used on-site, for our small Community Supported Agriculture ‘CSA’, and to be donated to local food banks. In addition to working on the BCCF, the position will work part-time with our Arboricultural, Conservation and Landscape team for the months of January and February to assist with winter fruit tree pruning and invasive species management. This positions is ideally suited to recent college graduates (not required) with a passion for food, farming, plants and landscapes who are looking to gain hands-on experience with small-scale, ecological farming practices. Previous experience working on a farm is preferred but not required.

| Schedule: | Full-time (40 hours/week); Fall 2024 – December 2025
| Pay Rate: | $20/hour
| Pay note | Paid holidays and up to 10 days of PTO are also provided.
| Location: | Upperville, VA; The Oak Spring estate is located in rural northern Virginia, 15 minutes from the nearest town and approximately 1 hour west of DC. Having access to a car is desirable, but not essential.
| To Apply: | We will begin reviewing applications on a rolling basis and will continue until the position is filled. Applicants are encouraged to apply early as we are seeking to fill this position quickly. To apply, please email a resume and cover letter to hr@osgf.org with the subject line “BCCF 2024-2025 Farm Apprenticeship”. Please describe your experience with farming/agriculture, what this apprenticeship would mean to you and your future goals, and when you could start.

Please note – preference will be given to local candidates who do not require onsite accommodation, however, if housing is available at the time, it may be an option for non-local candidates.
The 700-acre Oak Spring estate is located in Upperville, VA - which is nestled in the Virginia Piedmont, between the Blue Ridge and Bull Run mountains. The foundation’s mission is to support fresh thinking and bold action on the history and future of plants, including the culture of gardens, and landscapes and the importance of plants for human well-being. Our Biocultural Conservation Farm (BCCF) plays an important role in fulfilling this mission. Established in spring of 2019, the BCCF’s current objectives are rooted in food production, conservation and education.

To date, the BCCF has donated more than 100,000 lbs of fresh produce to several food banks and initiatives in our community. Additionally, we run a small Community Supported Agriculture (‘CSA’) program over 25-weeks from May-October in which customers pick-up a curated share of fresh vegetables once a week on the farm. The BCCF also works closely with our onsite Chef to provide our visiting artists and scholars in residence, as well as short course and workshop guests, with access to produce grown on the farm during their stays here.

Due to our unique geographical location and the agro-biodiversity and cultural foodways that exist within this region, we are very interested in growing and preserving heirloom crops that have a cultural and historical significance. In addition to the high-intensity, ecologically grown vegetable production on the farm, we also have several plots dedicated to production of seed as well as plants used by humans for natural dyeing, papermaking, fiber, medicine, and more. Much of the work week is focused on intensive annual food production, however, apprentices should expect to spend a portion of their time in the seed saving/natural dye/fiber/herbalism gardens – harvesting and processing materials, planting, weeding, etc.

The selected apprentice will work 40 hours/week Monday-Friday, August 2024 – December 2025. Each apprentice will additionally work one weekend in rotation with the other farm staff (typically a 6-week rotation) which would be followed by time off later that week to compensate for the hours worked over the weekend. CSA distribution days are managed by one team member each Wednesday, May – October, and are rotated weekly. On these days, team members should expect to work a longer day, followed by a shorter work day the immediate Friday.

Please note: We are not able to accommodate part-time applicants. This position is suited for someone who can commit to the full schedule of 40 hours per week for 13-15 months.

Farm apprentices work part-time with our Arboriculture, Conservation and Landscape (ACL) Team for the months of January and February. At Oak Spring, the ACL team works to manage and maintain our estate in an environmentally conscious manner so as to provide habitat for diverse plants and animals. We seek to actively manage the land to exemplify sustainable practices, promote biodiversity, and provide opportunities for the people who engage with us to learn about horticulture, and arboriculture. Since 2016, we have reforested 15 acres, planted over 10,000 trees and shrubs, restored 12 acres of abandoned horse pasture to native grassland ecosystems, removed invasive species from over 50 acres, decreased our regularly hayed and mowed acreage by over 50%, and have installed over 20 birdhouses, while setting aside over 100 acres of grassland for nesting birds.

During their time with the ACL team, the seasonal farm apprentices gain experience with winter pruning of fruit trees, invasive species removal, and general winter landscape maintenance. The apprentices will transition full-time again with the BCCF when the vegetable season kicks up again in early March.
RESPONSIBILITIES

Work closely with the Biocultural Conservation Farm (BCCF) team in all farm-related responsibilities, to include:

- Proper care and ongoing maintenance of the production fields, production greenhouse and hoop house, seed-saving and utility plant plots, cold frames, native pollinator plots, appropriate trees and open spaces.
- Actively participating in all facets of small-scale food production including: bed preparation, planting, watering, weeding, pruning, spreading compost, mulching and propagation of cultivated species.
- Harvesting, washing, packing, weighing, and delivering of fruits and vegetables.
- Managing CSA pick-up in rotation with the rest of the team.
- Maintaining a clean and safe workplace within shared indoor spaces (wash/pack, greenhouses, garage, etc.). Maintenance to include: sweeping, mopping, cleaning and sanitizing of tabletop surfaces, harvest bins and tools, sinks, wash tubs, etc.
- Assist with the maintenance of the seed-saving and utility plant plots (bed preparation, planting, weeding, watering, harvesting and cleaning of seed, etc.)
- Assist in the proper care of our pastured poultry flock to include: feeding, changing water, collecting eggs, turning the flock in and out, observing for injuries or illnesses, etc. This may also include assisting in the processing the birds for meat (optional).
- Work a full weekend in a 6-week rotation with the team, March – December. Weekend duties include taking care of chickens, managing field and greenhouse irrigation, light harvesting (depending on season), mowing, weeding, etc.
- Willingness to learn the use of light and heavy equipment and exercise safety precautions when using. Equipment may include: farm pick-up trucks, a BCS two-wheel walk-behind tractor, weed-eaters, leaf blowers, riding lawn mower, etc.
- Willingness to assist in any OSGF and/or farm-related ticketed events as needed. These will include at least two farm-to-table dinners and a fall farm festival day, however, other events may be required. Events will be communicated well in advance.
- Engaging with the BCCF volunteers while they are here for their weekly shifts in a positive and welcoming manner. Assisting in answering their questions and demonstrating proper techniques for the assigned task.
- Assist in sharing photography with the OSGF Communications Team.
- Other projects as assigned by the Biocultural Conservation Farm Director.

PREFERRED QUALIFICATIONS

- Demonstrated interest and passion for food and farming. Experience working on a farm/university farm/market garden/etc. is a plus.
- Ability to meet physical requirements of working outside, in varied weather conditions (including extreme heat and cold, rain, snow, humidity) in a working farm setting.
- Ability to do repetitive tasks for long periods of time (e.g., weeding, mulching, etc)
- Ability to work quickly, efficiently and thoroughly in every assigned task.
- Ability to work independently and also as part of a team.
- Excellent time-management, communication and organizational skills.
- Dependable, collaborative and supportive team player.
- Ability and willingness to operate machinery.
- Must have physical stamina to participate in rigorous outdoor activities.
- Ability to exhibit safe and responsible conduct in outdoor environments.
- Must be able to lift at least 50 pounds.
- Must have a valid driver's license. Position may require operation of an OSGF vehicle or
farm machinery.

- Must have reliable transportation to and from OSGF daily.

**TO APPLY**

To be considered for this apprenticeship, please email a resume and cover letter to hr@osgf.org with the subject line “BCCF 2024-2025 Farm Apprenticeship”. Please describe your experience with farming/agriculture, what this apprenticeship would mean to you and your future goals, and when you could start.

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Oak Spring Garden Foundation is an equal opportunity organization and will not allow discrimination based upon age, ancestry, disability, gender identity, national or ethnic origin, race, religious belief, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, political belief, or veteran status.