

SnoValley Tilth Experience Farming Project

2015 Operating Guidelines

Project Description

The Experience Farming Project is a self-directed and participant-driven opportunity for aspiring farmers to gain valuable hands-on experience while independently working a plot of land at Stuart Landing. We provide access to the land, resources, and tools needed to get started as a successful farmer without the sometimes prohibitive start-up costs associated with purchasing land and equipment.

Mentorship and continued learning is a key component of the Experience Farming Project. With the support of their mentor, participants set their own learning goals at the beginning of the season and evaluate their success in meeting these goals at the end. Mentors are also available to answer questions and to direct participants to community resources that may promote learning.

As part of the Experience Farming Project, all participants will employ sustainable farming practices that support the continued integrity of the land at Stuart Landing in accordance with standards set forth by Certified Naturally Grown.

What We Offer

Land

Stuart Landing is nestled on the edge of the winding Snoqualmie River just outside of Carnation, Washington. Less than 30 miles from Seattle, the location is both picturesque and convenient. The soil type is Nooksack heavy clay loam, rock free and rich with nutrients.

In your first year farming at Stuart Landing, you may choose to farm a plot of land that is 1/8, ¼ or ½ of an acre. Each plot will be cover cropped and tilled prior to your use.

Returning participants may choose to have any portion of your plot prepared and cover-cropped for overwintering in the Fall. The areas you wish to have cover-cropped must be clear for this preparation by Sept. 10th, as research indicates that seeding by Sept 15th provides the greatest benefits. Please group the land to be cover-cropped in one contiguous area and plan for this in your crop rotation and harvesting schedule; only one area (of your designation) will be prepared by program coordinators. Any remaining area of your plot must be overwintered responsibly to prevent soil erosion loss during flood season.

Discounted seeds and plant starts

The Experience Farm Project partners with select local businesses to offer our first year participants the opportunity to purchase seeds and starts at a discounted rate. Participants

may choose to purchase seeds from any vendor they choose and are not obligated to make their purchases from our partners.

Access to farming equipment and infrastructure

One of the biggest barriers for many new farms is the purchase of expensive farming equipment and infrastructure. Your program entry fees include access to a wash station as well as the initial tractor work (tilling or disc plowing) needed for springtime field preparation. Access to dry storage is available subject to program coordinator discretion, allocated roughly based on size of program plot.

Another benefit of participating in the Experience Farm Project provides you with the opportunity to hire a partner farmer at a discounted rate to complete soil work such as tilling, disc plowing, trenching, hilling, and root crop harvesting. All participants have the option to bring their own equipment to the land and/or to contract with a different provider of their choice.

Further tractor time can be purchased at a rate of \$80/hr for large tractor or \$70/hr for walk behind tractor services, with a minimum job fee of \$25.

Sales Outlets

As part of the Experience Farm Project, we expect that you will take the lead in developing your own business plan and developing your own sales outlets. For those of you who would like to try your hand at selling your produce at a roadside stand, we have partnered with the Carnation Tree Farm to offer you the opportunity to rent his roadside stand one day per week at a discounted rate.

Marketing

Limited marketing opportunities are included in your program fees. Your farm can be displayed on the Stuart Landing roadside sign and will also be featured on the Stuart Landing website and Facebook pages. Possible marketing opportunities include participation in a group booth at the Carnation Farmers Market or selling to the Farms for Life Program, depending upon the interests of all parties. As a new farm, you are expected to incorporate marketing into your business plan and we encourage you to develop additional marketing opportunities for yourself.

Mentorship and learning opportunities

Every new farmer needs someone they can turn to for advice, questions, and support. As a participant in the Experience Farm Project, you will be matched with a mentor. Your mentor is an experienced farmer who has volunteered for this role because they are passionate about helping new farmers get started successfully.

You will also be asked to complete a self-assessment at the beginning and end of the season measuring your values, knowledge and skills related to organic farming. Your mentor will review your self-assessment with you at the beginning and end of the season and help you set learning goals for the year. At the mid-season site visit, your mentor will visit you at the farm and check in to see how things are going. Your mentor can help to connect you to resources available to promote your learning. Any additional contact and support is provided is at the discretion of the mentor.

Program Costs

To participate in the Experience Farm Project, first year participants are expected to submit half of the program fees by Feb. 1st and the remaining half by April 15th or before beginning work onsite, whichever is earlier. Returning participants are expected to submit half of the program fees by Sept 15th of the previous year, and the remaining half by April 15th. The fee includes the cost of the land rental, cover cropping, initial tilling, and one additional hour of assistance with tractor work later in the season. Any costs beyond this are the responsibility of the participant and will be paid at the time that the cost is incurred to the contractor.

2015 fee structure:

Quantity	Price Per Growing Season
Half Acre	\$500
Quarter Acre	\$250
Eighth of an Acre	\$125

2016 fee structure:

Quantity	Price Per Growing Season
Half Acre	\$600
Quarter Acre	\$300
Eighth of an Acre	\$150

Expectations for Experience Farm Project Participants

- Past farming experience – minimum of one year interning or working on a farm; AND/OR participation in Cultivating Success Program; AND/OR demonstrated knowledge and skills that indicate ability to be successful in the program
- Willingness to take initiative and self-direct farming activities and learning experiences
- Stuart's Landing follows the guidelines set forth by the Certified Naturally Grown non-profit organization.

The Experience Farming Project Leadership is committed to working with you on your farm enterprise. Furthermore, we are excited to support you in becoming successful. We encourage your feedback and suggestions about the policies, applications, and anything else related to the program. Please be aware that as the program develops there may be changes or additions made to policies. Management staff will ensure that all participants are aware of any changes.

Diversity and Acceptance: We are strongly committed to cultivating a sustainable food system that is just and equitable for all people. We expect farmers to be respectful and inclusive of all people and backgrounds. You will be encouraged to engage with a diverse group of peers, mentors, customers, and neighbors through the project, and no disrespect or discrimination of people based on culture, ethnicity, gender, orientation, or any other background or identity will be tolerated. Such behavior could be grounds for expulsion from the Program and termination of your lease agreement.

**SnoValley Tilth Experience Farming Project
Participant Agreement**

I understand that I have been selected to participate in the Experience Farming Project because I show interest, aptitude, and ability to independently operate a small farm.

I have read and understand the project opportunities and expectations as outlined in the Experience Farming Project Handbook.

I agree to participate fully and in accordance with the expectations outlined in the Experience Farming Project Handbook.

I agree to pay _____ which will cover the following program costs:

- Stuart Landing Plot Number _____
- Equipment Rental
- Marketing Opportunities
- Mentorship

I agree to pay for additional services according to pricing outlined in Experience Farming Project Handbook.

I understand that a disregard of these terms may result in a termination of my participation in the Experience Farming Project.

Participant Signature/Date

Project Manager Signature/Date

Land Owner Signature/Date