



SnoValley Tilth Experience Farming Project

2018 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 in the Snoqualmie Valley. 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 in accordance with standards set forth by Certified Naturally Grown.

The application deadline for admittance to the program is January 1, 2018. Application review and parcel allocations begin November 15, 2017. Admittance to the program will be based upon experience and date of applying. Applications received after the deadline will be considered if space remains available. A deposit equaling half the total of the annual lease is required to secure entry.

What We Offer

Land

The Experience Farming Project's primary site, 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 $\frac{1}{4}$ or $\frac{1}{2}$ acre. Exceptions can be made for those farmers experienced in working larger parcels. Each plot will be cover-cropped and tilled prior to your use.

Returning participants are welcome up to 5 years and are required to have plots prepared and cover-cropped for overwintering in the Fall. The block areas you wish to have cover-cropped must be clear for this preparation by September 10th, as research indicates that seeding by September 15th provides the greatest benefit. 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.

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 wash stations 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. Access to walk-in cooler is also provided.

Another benefit provided to you by the Experience Farming Project is 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 Farming Project, we expect that you will take the lead in developing your own business plan and developing your own sales outlets.

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 Farming Project, you will have the option to 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 or the EFP manager will review your self-assessment with you at the beginning and end of the season and help you set learning goals for the year. 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 Farming Project, first-year participants are expected to submit half of the program fees upon acceptance 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 November 15th, 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 must be paid at the time the cost is incurred to the contractor. If these costs will prove a hardship for you, please let us know and we can discuss your options.

2018 fee structure:

Quantity	Price Per Growing Season
Quarter Acre	\$300
Half Acre	\$600
Acre	\$1200

Expectations for Experience Farming 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.
- Experience Farming Project follows the guidelines set forth by the Certified Naturally Grown non-profit organization.

Trash

You are responsible for removing all trash from your farm site, as well as stakes, trellises, twine, plastic mulch and other supplies after the growing season. Everything must be removed by the end of summer production in October, unless engaged in over-wintering production.

- Keep your fields and all common areas clean and neat at all times. Remove all trash each day. Follow all Food Safety guidelines and remove debris that would attract pests, including rodents.
- It is especially important to remove materials before they begin to decompose. Any small pieces of plastic or twine used for staking that damage equipment may result in fees for the farmer.
- Stack all farm supplies neatly and prevent them from blowing into other fields.
- In instances of severe trash accumulation, EFP management will provide farmer with written notice. The farmer will have 72 hours to remedy the situation, and if no action is taken, EFP will remove trash at farmer’s expense (**See Garbage Disposal section**).
- Farmers—especially those with employees—should take extra care to dispose of plastic bottles or other food or drink packaging, as it is the EFP farmers’ responsibility.

Weed Management

Weed management is an extremely important and challenging part of organic vegetable and small fruit production. If weeds are not properly managed, they will steal water and fertility from the soil and outcompete the crops you are trying to grow. Moreover, if allowed to go to seed, they can deposit millions of seeds into the “seed bank” that will take many years to deplete. Weed seeds may be (and will be) transported to neighboring parcels which will have a direct impact on your neighbors and their production. Thus, **it is of utmost importance that weeds are managed for the benefit of your production during the current season, but also to prevent weeds from harming production in future seasons either by yourself, your neighbors and future farmers at the EFP.**

Farmers growing organically have fewer tools at their disposal to control weeds. The primary means of controlling weeds are either by hand or mechanically. Mechanical cultivation can be sub-contracted or the responsibility of the farmer. Farmers with their own cultivation equipment should plant according to the equipment that they plan on using.

In the event that a parcel has a weed management issue and the weeds are getting out of control, **the farmer will be given written notice and will have 72 hours to address the situation.** If 72 hours elapse and the situation has not been taken care of, the EFP management will:

- Use whatever mechanical means possible to get the weeds managed, charging an **additional \$15/hour** on top of whatever equipment and operator costs are associated with weed management.
- **In extreme situations or where mechanical cultivation and weed management are not possible, crops may need to be disked in.**
- The EFP will not be held responsible for any damage that occurs to crops in the event that EFP management must weed a farmer's parcel.

EFP management will maintain weeds in all common areas, including roads and the edges of parcels. Farmers are responsible for maintaining weeds within their parcels, including around irrigation lines.

Garbage Disposal, Food Waste and Abandoned Property

EFP staff will maintain all common areas, including the wash-pack station, hand wash station and greenhouse, will empty garbage receptacles, and will make dump runs as needed. However, farmers are responsible for disposal of all of their own waste products. **There will be fees levied for any egregious instances of trash dumping corresponding to the severity of the instance, and at the discretion of EFP staff.** Best attempts will be made to allow for owners to claim property that appears to be abandoned, but ultimately EFP reserves the right to dispose of any property left on-site.

Failure to Comply & Probation

Every farmer involved with the EFP program must agree to follow the rules and guidelines laid out in this Participant Handbook. While EFP staff will make every reasonable effort to communicate with farmers around any questions, comments, or concerns with policies and rules laid out in this manual, **it is ultimately the farmer's responsibility to ensure that his or her farm operation is in compliance with all guidelines detailed here.** Please contact EFP management for any questions or clarification on any policies.

In instances where a farmer or farm operation fails to comply with any of the specified guidelines, the issue will be addressed as follows:

1. The Farmer will be given a verbal warning and a chance to remedy the issue as simply and quickly as possible.
2. The Farmer will be issued a written warning and given a second chance to remedy the issue as quickly as possible.
3. The Farmer will be placed on Probation. Once on Probation, the farmer will be required to meet with the EFP committee in order to agree upon a plan and timeline for the farmer to be removed from Probation. Upon meeting the terms of the agreement, at the discretion of the EFP management, farmers will be removed from Probation.
4. Failure to comply with the terms of Probation will result either in leases not being renewed for the following season or immediate removal from the EFP program, including plowing in of any crops currently growing.

There are several other instances that will result in immediate removal from the EFP program and cancellation of leases: The use of non-organic inputs, intentional abuse or stealing of EFP or other farmers' property, use of illegal drugs or weapons on EFP property, or any kind of violence or aggression toward others.

If a Farmer is asked to leave the EFP program for any of the reasons listed above, there will be no refunds of any fees or forgiveness of outstanding dues or bills.

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.

