

# UBC Farm Practicum in Sustainable Agriculture

2012 Overview



# UBC Farm Practicum 2012

## Overview

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### What is it?

The UBC Farm Practicum is an eight-month experiential learning program designed for aspiring farmers, urban gardeners, aspiring environmental educators, and students with an interest in applying their learning about sustainable agriculture and food systems.

Students bring a diversity of backgrounds and life experience to the practicum. Our program graduates share a vision of livelihoods and lifestyles grounded in sustainable and community-based food systems.

### Where is it?

**UBC Farm**, the living laboratory of the Faculty of Land and Food Systems, hosts the practicum program. Our south campus farm is the site of the majority of farming activities, guest speaker presentations, and classroom sessions. We also travel to a number of local farm operations, produce distributors, and farmers' markets to provide a regionally grounded food system context, and to make personal connections with experienced food growers.

### When does it happen?

In 2012, the Practicum schedule begins March 10<sup>th</sup> and ends November 3<sup>rd</sup>. The scheduled program hours are:

- March - April: 7 hours per week on Saturdays (9 am - 5 pm)
- May - August: 21 hours per week on Wednesdays-Thursdays (9 am-12 pm), Fridays (9 am-5 pm) and Saturdays (8 am-5 pm)
- September – November: 15 hours per week, Fridays (9 am-5 pm) and Saturdays (8 am-5 pm)

An additional 5 hours per week outside of program hours may be needed to establish and care for student's personal and shared research garden plots.

### How much does it cost?

The fees for practicum students in 2012 are \$3,200. The costs to the UBC Farm per student for facilities, supplies, instruction, and travel to regional farms, are roughly \$8000. The farm and market tasks contributed by each student as part of the hands-on learning offset these additional costs. As of the 2011 season, a \$400 reimbursement was made available to UBC students concurrently enrolled in practicum-focused directed study courses for credit. We are in the process of applying for course accreditation as a restricted elective for undergraduates with third year standing, and when approved, the financial reimbursement per credit hour would be similar. Please contact us for the most current details regarding course accreditation and fee structures.

## General Information

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### 1. The UBC Farm and Centre for Sustainable Food Systems

The Centre for Sustainable Food Systems (CSFS) is home to the UBC Farm, a 24-hectare teaching, research and community farm located on UBC's Vancouver campus. Forming a rich mosaic of cultivated fields, teaching gardens, forest stands, hedgerows and orchard plantings, the farm is a unique urban agrarian gem.

In close proximity to and fully integrated with a world-class community of researchers, the CSFS affords an opportunity to better understand and manage a productive land base that supports a thriving farm-forest ecosystem and adjacent urban population. The interface with the city enhances research opportunities that also address community, ecosystem and global health.

### 2. The Practicum

The program was established in 2008 as the "Sowing Seeds for the Future UBC Farm apprenticeship". Since that time, more than half of our program graduates have continued to develop their farming skills either with farming mentors in regional and international settings, or in partnerships with other new farmers.

The main approach to learning within the program is hands-on practice. Participants carry out seasonal farming activities with leadership provided by UBC Farm staff in the greenhouses, gardens, fields, orchards, and at our farmers' markets. Skills and concepts included in the program's learning outcomes range from soil fertility management, greenhouse and horticultural techniques, harvesting and post-harvest handling, irrigation basics, selected weed and pest identification, sustainable cultivation methods, safe operation of small tractors and implements, and operating direct markets and community supported agriculture (C.S.A.) programs.

### 3. Content

Applying the concepts and mastering the skills that form the foundations of sustainable agriculture are the key learning objectives of the practicum. We strive to create a strong group learning environment, and make connections between the conceptual knowledge and practical field skills. The outline below is the condensed syllabus and schedule from 2011.

**2011 Condensed Program Syllabus and Schedule:**

<b><u>2011 dates</u></b>	<b><u>Program Content</u></b>
March 12 - April 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Orienting to UBC Farm systems and context</li> <li>● Soil formation and management</li> <li>● Seed and seedling biology</li> <li>● Sourcing seeds</li> <li>● Transplant seeding</li> <li>● Hand tools: Introduction and overview</li> <li>● Crop rotation: basics and the UBC Farm crop rotation plan</li> </ul>
April 9 - April 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Fostering farm biodiversity: planting and tending a hedgerow</li> <li>● Nutrient cycles: soil sampling, testing, and interpretations</li> <li>● Composting: setting up small and medium-scale systems</li> <li>● Direct seeding: introduction to the equipment and crops</li> <li>● Crop planning: introduction to UBC Farm systems</li> <li>● Cover crops: overview and UBC Farm systems</li> <li>● First regional farm field visit</li> </ul>
April 30	<b><i>Student assignment: Present rotational and planting plan for personal research garden plot</i></b>
May 4 - May 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cultivation comparisons—manual and mechanical techniques</li> <li>● Plant biology basics</li> <li>● Grafting practice</li> <li>● Care and maintenance of farm/garden tools: a professional workshop</li> <li>● Marketing channels overview: farmers' markets, community supported agriculture (CSA), restaurants, wholesale produce distributors</li> <li>● Tractor safety and initial training</li> <li>● More regional farm field visits</li> </ul>
May 27	<b><i>Student assignment: Present regions of B.C. research</i></b>
June 1 - June 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Soil moisture: identification and key concepts</li> <li>● Irrigation design options and field set-up</li> <li>● Blogging workshop: multi-media communication and outreach tools for small farms and environmental educators</li> <li>● Weed management: field practice and overview of options</li> <li>● Poultry management: UBC Farm chickens and eggs</li> <li>● Produce harvesting, processing, and direct marketing</li> <li>● Orchard pruning: practice in the UBC Farm Heritage Apple Orchard</li> <li>● Overnight regional farm-field visits: Pemberton Valley Farms</li> </ul>
June 29 - July 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Vegetative propagation</li> <li>● Bee-keeping workshop and native bee identification</li> <li>● Produce harvesting and processing</li> <li>● Continued tractor training</li> </ul>
July 27 - Aug. 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Integrated pest management: workshop and walkabout</li> <li>● More produce harvesting, processing, and marketing</li> </ul>

Sept. 3	<b><i>Student assignment: Off-site farm visit case study due</i></b>
Aug. 24 - Sept. 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Seed saving workshop</li> <li>● Cultivation forum: till or no-till debate</li> <li>● Continued application of harvesting, processing, and marketing skills</li> </ul>
Sept. 23 - Oct. 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cover cropping: end of season field preparation and sowing</li> <li>● Mapping resources for farm planning</li> <li>● Techniques and tips for assessing land quality for farming and gardening</li> </ul>
Oct. 21 - Nov. 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Record keeping: overviews from marketing and fieldwork</li> <li>● Seed inventory: planning for the following season</li> <li>● Non-timber forest products: options for regional land stewards</li> <li>● Review of the season</li> </ul>
Oct. 29	<b><i>Final student assignment: Present your farm plan</i></b>

#### 4. Instructional Techniques and other considerations

We structure the program to ensure that all students experience a variety of field responsibilities and opportunities to develop sustainable farming and gardening skills. Please note that our responsibilities in the field are physically demanding, and take place rain or shine. Students are encouraged to apply for the program only if they are comfortable with the physical requirements of farming. **If you have chronic back pain or previous knee injuries, please consider possible impacts of farming and gardening tasks to your personal health and comfort levels before completing your application. Don't hesitate to let us know if you have any questions about the physical requirements.**

The Centre for Sustainable Food Systems/UBC Farm does have long-term plans, indeed, clear visions, of a residential college (please see *Cultivating Place: Immersive Sustainability in a Farm-integrated Residential College* <http://www.landfood.ubc.ca/cultivatingplace/>), but **currently, we have no housing available.** Included in the longer-term visions for the practicum program are a university-backed certificate of sustainable farming for continuing studies or community students. Similar to the development of course accreditation, please contact us for the most current details regarding program accreditation and post-graduate care.

#### 5. Fees and Payment for 2012

The cost for the 2012 program is **\$3200**. We receive many more applications each year than we can accommodate, which means that upon acceptance to the program, a non-refundable registration deposit of \$320 is required to hold your place. An additional non-refundable administration fee of \$150 is due by February 10, 2012, one month prior to

program start date. The remaining program fees (\$2730) are due the first Saturday of the program in March. No refunds will be available for withdrawal after April 7, 2012.

## **6. Visiting the UBC Farm**

We strongly encourage prospective students to visit the farm and meet UBC Farm staff prior to applying to the practicum. We believe this gives applicants a better understanding of the hands-on nature of the program, along with a better sense of the UBC Farm community. Interested participants are invited to join in a volunteer session and participate in the vibrant learning community we foster.

## **7. Criteria for Selection**

The goal of our program is to prepare future sustainable farmers, scientists, teachers, and community leaders to take the next step in applying their learning and interests in sustainable food systems and agriculture. In choosing individuals who will carry out difficult tasks, learn, grow food, harvest, and often eat together for 8 months, we are in effect creating a community. Out of the pool of applicants, we attempt to achieve a balance of interests, geographical and cultural origins, ages, and gender.

We welcome all applicants, though the program is geared towards newcomers to farming and gardening. The selection committee looks highly upon applicants who can articulate the ways in which the program fits their long-term learning and professional objectives. Also important to the selection committee, applicants should carefully consider how the demands of the practicum schedule will logistically fit with their other life commitments.

Applicants must be at least 20 years old.

## **8. How to Apply**

The application for the 2012 season is available for electronic submission through our website. The application deadline is October 30<sup>th</sup> 2011. We hope to have a response for all applications before the end of December 2011. We look forward to hearing from you!

## **9. Further Questions?**

If you have questions not included in the overview here, please send your questions in an email to [ubcfarm.seeds@gmail.com](mailto:ubcfarm.seeds@gmail.com) or [delisa.lewis@ubc.ca](mailto:delisa.lewis@ubc.ca)