



UBC FARM PRACTICUM IN SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

2017 OVERVIEW

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Overview

WHAT IS IT?

The UBC Farm Practicum in Sustainable Agriculture creates and supports new leaders in sustainable agriculture by providing an experiential learning environment that engages the practicum students with farmers and community educators in an agriculturally-based sustainability dialogue that is both locally, and globally significant.

Our goal is to inspire and cultivate new farmers and sustainable agriculture educators who will transform their communities and their food systems through initiatives and enterprises that are socially, ecologically, and economically healthy and viable.

The Practicum is an eight-month experiential learning course designed for beginning farmers, urban and community gardeners, aspiring environmental educators with a focus on food production systems, and students with an interest in applying their learning about sustainable agriculture and food systems. Because of the level of commitment required to successfully complete the practicum, we are looking for applicants who:

- Are ready to devote themselves to engaged participation in the coursework and fieldwork for the full eight months;
- Show the capacity to contribute positively to the practicum team and to the UBC Farm community.

Students accepted into the practicum bring a diversity of backgrounds and life experience to the program. 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, and occasionally agriculturally-related operations (such as farmer's markets, produce distributors, etc.) to provide a regionally-grounded food system context, and to make personal connections with experienced food growers.

WHEN DOES IT HAPPEN?

In 2017, the Practicum schedule begins March 18th and ends October 28th. The scheduled program hours are:

- March - April: 7 hours per week on Saturdays (9 am – 5 pm)

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- May - August: 20 hours per week on Wednesdays---Thursdays (9 am – 12 pm), Fridays (9 am – 5 pm) and Saturdays (8 am – 4 pm)
 - September – October: 14 hours per week, Fridays (9 am – 5 pm) and Saturdays (8 am – 4 pm)

An average an additional 5 hours per week outside of program hours is expected to be needed to establish and care for students' personal and shared garden plots.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

The practicum program fees for 2017 are \$4160. Experienced instruction with a close student-to-teacher ratio is a foundation of the practicum learning environment, and our intent is to provide this opportunity to dedicated individuals who are committed to exploring farming and food systems related enterprises and careers. To do so, we must balance programming, instruction, and facilities costs with fees in a way that meets our operating expenses.

General Information

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.

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 gone on to develop their farming skills with farming mentors in regional and international settings, in partnerships with other new farmers, or by starting their own agricultural operations.

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.

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. Although the 2017 schedule and topics will vary from the example given below, the outline below still offers a useful example of a condensed syllabus and schedule from a past year.

EXAMPLE: CONDENSED PROGRAM SYLLABUS AND SCHEDULE

DATES	PROGRAM CONTENT
March 17 – March 31	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Orienting to UBC Farm systems and context● Soil formation and management● Seed and seedling biology● Sourcing seeds



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Transplant seeding● Hand tools: Introduction and overview● Crop rotation: basics and the UBC Farm crop rotation plan
April 7 – April 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Fostering farm biodiversity: planting and tending a hedgerow● Nutrient cycles: soil sampling, testing, and interpretations● Composting: setting up small and medium-scale systems● Direct seeding: introduction to the equipment
April 28	<i>Student assignment: Present rotational and planting plan for personal garden</i>
May 2 – May 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Cultivation comparisons—manual and mechanical techniques● Plant biology basics● Care and maintenance of farm/garden tools: a professional workshop● Marketing channels overview: farmers’ markets, community supported agriculture (CSA), restaurants, wholesale produce distributors
May 25	<i>Student assignment: Present agro-ecological</i>
May 30 – June 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Soil moisture: identification and key concepts● Irrigation design options and field set-up● Communication and outreach tools for small farms and environmental educators● Weed management: field practice and overview of options● Poultry management: UBC Farm chickens and eggs● Produce harvesting, processing, and direct marketing● Orchard pruning: practice in the UBC Farm Heritage Apple Orchard● Overnight regional farm—field visits: Pemberton Valley Farms

June 27 – July 21

- Vegetative propagation
- Bee-keeping workshop and native bee identification
- Produce harvesting and processing
- Continued tractor training

July 25 – Aug 18

- Integrated pest management: workshop and walkabout

Sept. 3

Student assignment: Farm Case study or

Aug 22 – Sept 15

- Seed saving workshop
- Cultivation forum: till or no---till debate
- Continued application of harvesting,

Sept 21 – Oct 13

- Cover cropping: end of season field preparation and sowing
- Food sovereignty / Food justice
- Techniques and tips for assessing land

Oct 19 – Nov 3

- Record keeping: overviews from marketing and fieldwork
- Seed inventory: planning for the following season
- Non-timber forest products: options for regional land stewards
- Review of the season

Nov 1

Final student assignment: Present your farm

SAMPLE WEEKLY SCHEDULE

WEDNESDAY (9-12)	THURSDAY (9-12)	FRIDAY (9-5)	SATURDAY (8-4)
9-11: Orchard Care and Maintenance w/ Guest Speaker (start in classroom, and continue the lesson with hands-on demonstration in the orchard) 11-12: Plot time (students work on their individual/shared plots)	9-9:15: Weekly Announcements 9:15-9:30: Weed Management review 9:30-12: Weeding in Brassica and Flowers Fields	9-12:30: Harvest Rotations (students rotate between different fields) 12:30-1:30: Communal lunch prepared by one practicum and one staff 1:30-5: Harvest Processing Rotations	8-12:30: Market/Farm Rotations and General Crew (one-on-one rotations with various staff members) 1:30-2: Rotations Check-In (students share what they did and learned in their Fri/Sat rotations) 2-4: Beekeeping w/ Guest Speaker

THE PRACTICUM

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.

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.

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 relative 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, as well as applicants who have demonstrated experience in or a commitment to sustainable agriculture/food systems. 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.

HOW TO APPLY

Applications are available for electronic submission through our website. **The deadline is October 17th.** However, preference will be granted to applications received prior to Oct 11th. Please note: If all positions are not filled after the application deadline, additional applicants will be considered.

We will host an Open House at the UBC Farm on September 17th, 12-2 pm. This will be an opportunity for interested applicants to meet staff and students, tour the farm, and ask questions. Please see the UBC Farm website for directions (<http://ubcfarm.ubc.ca/contact-us/>).

In addition, the Farm, as a whole, will be offering an Open House on this same date; please check the website for updates, and/or sign up for our E-newsletter (<http://ubcfarm.ubc.ca/contact-us/ubc-farm-newsletter/>).

Top applicants will be selected for interviews. We notify all applicants of their status in the program by mid-late December of the application year. Since our staff size is small in the winter, we appreciate if you kindly refrain from inquiring about your status, unless you have not heard from us by Dec 20th.

FURTHER QUESTIONS

If you have questions not included in the overview here, please send your questions to Seth Friedman, Practicum Coordinator: seth.friedman@ubc.ca.





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