

Nature and Nurture Farm

ORGANIC FARM INTERNSHIP DESCRIPTION

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Description of Nature and Nurture, LLC

Mike Levine and Erica Kempter are the owners of Nature and Nurture Farm, an Organic Vegetable Seed Farm. We have been doing organic and ecological landscape installation and maintenance, fruit and vegetable gardening, and consulting for at least 20 years. Our farm was purchased in 2013 and we live on-site year-round. In 2017, our farm and seed business became Certified Organic. We are in Scio Township about 8 miles west of downtown Ann Arbor (pop. 117,025). The closest town is the city of Dexter (small town, pop. 4,160), about 2.8 miles to the north.

Our farm is situated on 122 acres of woods, wetlands, and clay-loam fields with diverse topography. We have at least 62 acres of fields and the rest is wooded or wetland. We produce shiitake mushrooms which are sold to local businesses and directly to consumers. We grow heirloom vegetable seeds and sell them online through Nature and Nurture Seeds. Extra vegetable and fruit produce are sold through various avenues. We have a fruit tree nursery and diverse orchard. We teach organic gardening classes. We have lots of space to grow so we welcome new projects. In addition, we are planning, designing, and implementing projects that involve elements of permaculture, edible forest gardens, and restoration agriculture. A local farmer harvests organic hay on much of our acreage. We are making plans for a small cattle operation. We continue to run our landscape gardening business which is primarily off-site at various residences in the Ann Arbor area.

Our Internship Overview

We are looking for self-motivated interns with a positive attitude and excellent work ethic, who would like to work on a diverse, bio-intensive, medium-sized, organic farm. Responsibilities may include soil preparation, planting, weeding, harvesting, irrigation, seed cleaning, working on basic farm infrastructure (helping build fences, hoop houses, etc.), and helping with farm events. We do not have sleeping quarters for interns in our house, but we can discuss (on a case by case basis) options for interns who may want to sleep in a tent and share our bathroom and kitchen facilities.

We offer a farm to table lunch, produce to take home, education, and a stipend dependent on experience and performance. The growing season is from April through November; however, we have some flexibility for shorter internships. Preference will be given to interns who can commit to the whole season. Interns who are involved in seed cleaning will need to commit through October (seeds are cleaned in August, September, and October).

This internship is experiential and will focus on hands-on application of sustainable agriculture principles and practices. Erica and Mike are both teachers and are committed to the education of interns. Interns who have a special interest may do additional projects in the following areas:

Growing and marketing of produce

Seed growing, harvesting, and cleaning
Shiitake mushroom growing
Restoration agriculture/permaculture
Organic invasive species control
Fruit growing
Nursery Propagation

Mealtimes

We provide lunch at our farm so we can all eat together and help build community. Interns are expected to help with harvesting lunch ingredients, cleanup, and occasionally may be asked to help prep food for cooking which provides farm-to-table cooking opportunities. Cooks will prepare the meal and clean up right after we eat including washing and drying cooking dishes/pans, wiping tables, counters, and stove area, and sweeping floors. The rest of us pitch in to clean their own dishes, clear the table, put the food away, and minimize impact on the inside of the house.

All farm workers are REQUIRED to have lunch together as a community to share life, answer questions about the day's events, and discuss the direction for the rest of the day.

Household

We have a 3-bedroom farmhouse. We use the back porch as our main entrance. The shared areas in the main farmhouse are the kitchen, the dining room, the back bathroom, and the back porch which are shared with Erica and Mike. The rest of the house, the south side (bedrooms, living room, and 2nd bathroom) is Erica and Mike's private space. We don't wear shoes in the house, and we must be vigilant to keep the floor clean. Everyone should clean up after themselves in the shared areas and put their personal items away. The back bathroom is primarily used and kept clean by interns and employees.

We have a washing machine, a dryer, clotheslines, and detergent available for personal use, as needed.

Also, we do not allow smoking of any kind or burning of candles, incense, lanterns, etc. in any buildings on the farm and in any areas where food/produce is being handled. Tobacco smoke in the greenhouse or in the fields is strictly prohibited due to tobacco mosaic virus (tobacco smoke contains a virus that can infect tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, and potatoes) Abuse of drugs and alcohol will not be tolerated!

Work Schedule

This internship is a work-learning experience, so you can work after required hours if you want. Minimally we ask that our interns make a commitment of 3 days per week, if possible (days of the week to be agreed upon and will generally stay the same) and work 9am -5ish pm on their scheduled days. If you miss a day we expect you to make it up on a different day. We allow $\frac{1}{2}$ a day off per month for sick/misssed/vacation days and they are cumulative. We may begin earlier during the heat of the season. Lunchtime can be variable, but is usually around 12:30 and is a $\frac{1}{2}$ hour long. Occasionally, you will be expected to work later than 5:00 if there is an unfinished project, if a frost is coming or there are any pressing farm emergencies. It is generally understood that workers might need short (10 or 15 min.) water/snack breaks in the morning or afternoon. If it's hot out, we might end the day early and go swimming at any of several local lakes. Our farm has a hiking trail and you are welcome to hike the land after work.

Kiwi Dog

Our beautiful, sweet, and wonderful Australian shepherd mix lives on our farm. She's friendly is generally well behaved. She loves our interns and can't wait to meet you.

REQUIRED Work Parties/Open Houses

We will have various events including volunteer work parties, tours, workshops, social events, and a harvest party. It is expected that interns will help before, during, and after events. We will let you know as these events are scheduled.

Our friends/customers might come with or without their children and/or dogs to play in the backyard, or just walk about the farm and explore. We ask that you greet them if we are not around to host to make sure they are supposed to be here, and are content, safe, and don't do things that make extra work for us. We expect you to help be our eyes and ears on the farm.

Compensation and Expectations

This is an unpaid internship, but we can offer need based financial aid to a limited number of recipients. If you are an undergraduate in PITE please check with that office regarding financial aid. If you are a graduate student in SEAS you can apply for financial aid here

https://seas.umich.edu/academics/resources/financial_aid/funding/weinberg_intern

If you don't qualify for either of these options, there may be other financial aid options available so let us know if you need help.

We let you set your commitment length. However, we are counting on you to live up to your commitment. If you need to end your internship with us for reasons beyond your control, WE NEED AT LEAST 2 WEEKS NOTICE ahead of time (more notice is preferred). We will provide education, community, good vibes, a delicious farm lunch, toilet paper, first aid supplies, water, and a reasonable share of produce from the farm to take home when there is surplus. If you want something exotic for lunch that we don't have, you may need to buy it yourself. We ask that our interns/farm crew supply your own personal hygiene products (sunscreen, bug repellent, etc.) and use your own calling card or cell phone for outgoing long-distance calls.

Supplies/Equipment/Clothing Needed

Swimming gear

rain coat and pants

work boots, hiking boots, or rubber boots (no bare feet during work time)

cell phone or calling card for long distance phone calls

water bottle

pocket knife

towel

warm clothing (polar fleece, wool, polypropylene etc.) for Fall & Spring Work

long underwear for Fall & Spring Work

Sun hat

Sunscreen

Bug repellent

Optional Items (Extras are on the Farm)

work gloves

favorite cookbooks or recipes

musical instrument

slippers for inside the house