

# Hawthorne Valley Farm Apprentice Handbook

As of August 2011

## Welcome to Hawthorne Valley Farm!

This farm is a diverse enterprise embedded in a larger community. It has much to offer an apprentice as a result of its community setting, but its complex structure and size can often be a challenge to the newcomer. We hope this handbook will help answer some basic questions. It is meant as a written accompaniment to the initial orientation at the beginning of the season. Just remember, in order to ensure that you feel comfortable working here we encourage you to ask questions and express concerns. Thank you for joining us!

## Overview

All Hawthorne Valley Farm apprentices experience farming through hands-on learning on our diversified Biodynamic farm. Apprentices rotate through all areas of the farm, working with the field vegetables, Corner Garden, milking herd, and livestock operation. The Farm's focus is both production and education.

Apprentices work with the farm team to learn the daily rhythms in each part of the farm and participate in discussions with the farmers. Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training (CRAFT) and other activities/classes are available through the other branches of Hawthorne Valley Association.

The farm apprenticeships focus on the overall picture of the farm. The advanced apprenticeships focus on either vegetable or livestock operation.

Learning about.....

- Biodynamics
- Milking and livestock management
- Vegetable production-field and market garden
- Grazing and pasture management
- Community supported agriculture

## Farm Staff

*Steffen Schneider: Director of Farm Operations*

Steffen finished his agricultural university studies in Giessen, Germany in 1982. He has been a Biodynamic practitioner since 1983, first in Wisconsin and, since 1989, at

Hawthorne Valley Farm. He especially loves working with the livestock and the dairy cows and his passion for Biodynamics continues to grow. He has given workshops at numerous conferences and also teaches at the Biodynamic Course at the Pfeiffer Center in Spring Valley, New York. Presently, Steffen serves as treasurer of the Biodynamic Association of North America.

*Katy Lince: Field Vegetables Manager*

Katy apprenticed at Angelic Organics in 1996 and has been at Hawthorne Valley Farm since 1997. Since 2002, she has been the main field vegetable farmer. She enjoys working with both animals and vegetables, noticing the interrelated rhythms of the two.

*Bob Bower: Corner Garden Manager*

Prior to joining Hawthorne Valley Farm in late 2010, Bob worked for over 15 years at Angelic Organics, a northern Illinois, 1,500-member, Biodynamic CSA with 30 acres in vegetable production each year. At Angelic Organics, Bob was both the General Manager and the Growing Manager. Additionally, since 1995, Bob managed efforts in Customer Service, Distribution, Finance, Marketing, and more. Bob is the father of three adult sons, is learning how to keep honeybees, and enjoys studying Anthroposophy and Biodynamics.

*Andrew Whitby: Herdsman*

Andrew Whitby is the dairy herdsman at Hawthorne Valley Farm, where he enjoys life with his wife and three daughters. Prior to moving to Hawthorne Valley, he worked for several years at Seven Stars Farm in Kimberton, Pennsylvania as a general farm hand and milker. In 2008, he attended the part-time Biodynamics training at the Pfeiffer Center in Spring Valley, New York. His previous profession as a carpenter equipped him with a wide variety of skills, which daily prove useful as a farmer. During his childhood, Andrew spent a great deal of time on the Biodynamic farms of Sussex, England where he developed his original interest in and love of farm life.

*Kelly O'Hearn: Livestock Manager*

Kelly has worked with the livestock at Hawthorne Valley Farm since 2009. She assumed a full-time position as Livestock Manager in the fall of 2010. Prior, Kelly worked at several organic vegetable farms in Columbia County and participated in starting a CSA. She is interested in gardening and cooking, fiber arts, and herbalism. She lives at the farm with her partner of 20 years, Paul, and their 3 dogs.

## **History**

Hawthorne Valley began in the early 1970's, with the apprentice program starting in the mid 1970's. The community was started by a group of Waldorf schoolteachers from the Rudolf Steiner School in Manhattan and local Biodynamic farmers. The hope was to create a place where education, agriculture, and the arts could flow into one another to

help nurture the human spirit. Children came regularly from the Rudolf Steiner School to have an on-farm experience. These visits grew into a Visiting Students/Camp Program serving over 500 children each year. A couple of years later, the co-worker families from our neighbors at Camphill Copake helped expand these educational efforts with the addition of the Hawthorne Valley Waldorf School. The small Biodynamic farm soon grew into a diverse, value added operation. Painters, sculptors, musicians, and craftsmen joined the community. What began almost forty years ago as a small, pioneering effort of six families has grown into a mature community based on the thoughts and life work of Rudolf Steiner.

## **Organization of Hawthorne Valley Farm**

Hawthorne Valley Farm (HVF) is part of a larger, legal organization called the Hawthorne Valley Association (HVA). In itself, the farm has no legal standing. It is called a “branch” of HVA. The Farm branch includes the vegetable and livestock operations, the on-farm Creamery, Bakery, and Kraut Cellar, Farm Store, Green Market, the Main House with Visiting Students and Overnight Farm Camp Programs, and the Farm Learning Center which offers skills workshops, programs for children and adults, and vocational training programs.

Other branches of HVA include:

- Hawthorne Valley Waldorf School
- Hawthorne Valley Farmscape Ecology Program
- Hawthorne Valley Center for Social Research
- Hawthorne Valley Alkion Center
- Hawthorne Valley Adonis Press

Other small initiatives, such as *Free Columbia* (an art school) and *Think Outword* (a group of young people working towards social change), benefit from HVA acting as their fiscal agent.

Hawthorne Valley Association is a not-for-profit, 501(c)3 organization. It owns all the assets of the corporation, including the land, buildings, equipment, and livestock. The 400 acres comprising Hawthorne Valley Farm are part of American Farmland Trust and held by the Columbia Land Conservancy. All our land, except certain designated plots, are in a conservation easement given over to Biodynamic farming into perpetuity.

Hawthorne Valley Association is governed by a Board of Directors. The Board has legal and financial responsibility for all of its branches and insures that the Association continues to fulfill its mission through its diverse programs. Martin Ping serves as the Executive Director of HVA and attends all Board meetings as a non-voting member. The HVA centralizes several administration activities for all of its branches including Finances, Human Resources, Public Relations, Marketing, and Maintenance. Most of

these departments are located in offices above the Learning Center. Each branch has its own separate budgets.

Governing an organization as complex as the Hawthorne Valley Association is a challenging task, especially for the all volunteer Board. The Inter-branch Management Group (IMG) serves as the interface between the non-employee Board of Directors and the management of the different branches. Martin Ping, as Executive Director, serves as chair of the IMG.

Hawthorne Valley Farm is organized into several departments and is managed through weekly meetings of the Farm Management Group (FMG), led by Steffen Schneider.

## **Mission of Hawthorne Valley Farm**

Our vision statement reads, “nurturing the land that nurtures us” and we take this statement seriously. Our goals are to:

- Establish a true Biodynamic farm
- Connect children and adults with the land and the food that nourishes them
- Provide agricultural products of the highest quality.

Through the farm’s products, we hope to open an educational dialogue about our environment, our economy, and ourselves.

Adding value to our farm products through our Dairy, Farm Store, Bakery, and Sauerkraut Cellar allows us to grow our farm in a balanced way—with less stress on the land, plants and animals. The income from these value-added activities coupled with the greater profit margin from direct marketing (as described in the next paragraph) permits the farm to maintain a reasonable and “human” scale of operation. Thus we are able to avoid the monoculturally-based, industrial-scale, factory-farming methods which are prevalent in the country today.

Local, regional, direct marketing of our products through the Farm Store, the Green Market in NYC, and the CSA program allows for a social interaction that brings people onto the farm and helps to develop long lasting connections. Further, providing our farm products to the other branches of HVA such as the Visiting Students Program and the Waldorf School allows us to develop deeper relationships with their participants as well.

Finally, our relationship with the Visiting Students Program and our own Apprenticeship Program bring many young people onto the farm. It is our hope that the ongoing dialogue amongst us all will contribute to an increased awareness of the importance of sustainable living and working practices.

## The Work of Rudolf Steiner and Anthroposophy

Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) was a philosopher, a natural scientist, and a researcher into the relationship between “spirit” and “matter”. In his lifetime he made lasting contributions to the fields of natural science, medicine, education, painting, sculpture, dance, politics, economics, and agriculture. Biodynamic farming and Waldorf education draw their inspiration from his work.

Steiner developed a science of spiritual investigation, which he called Anthroposophy – or the study of the wisdom of man. The results of these investigations in the fields mentioned above form the basis of over 6,000 lectures and over 30 books. He hoped to help achieve the integration of science, art, religion, and morality within a greater cosmology and to further the understanding of the role of the human being within evolution.

It was through very special faculties and abilities that Steiner was able to bridge the gap between “spirit” and “matter.” In such books as *Theosophy*, *How to Know Higher Worlds*, and *An Outline of Esoteric Science*, Steiner sets forth paths of self-development that help the individual develop the capacity for direct personal knowledge and deeper understanding of the spiritual and physical worlds and the interplay between them.

At Hawthorne Valley, some people are members of the Anthroposophical Society, an association of people interested in knowing more about Steiner’s work. Of these people, some choose to belong to the School for Spiritual Science. In order to join this School, one has to make a commitment to follow Steiner’s path of development. Meditation is one key to this path and members of the School for Spiritual Science are given a series of meditations with which to work.

Hawthorne Valley is a thriving, multi-faceted community. Some parents who have never heard of Steiner’s work send their children to the Waldorf School simply because it offers an excellent independent education. Others parents are committed students of anthroposophy or “anthroposophists”. It was extremely important to Rudolf Steiner that people work with his ideas out of complete freedom, without any dogma attached to their efforts. This remains the ideal at Hawthorne Valley.

### **Biodynamics**

Biodynamic (BD) farming is based on a series of lectures, called *The Agriculture Course*, given by Rudolf Steiner at the end of his life. These fascinating lectures often prove to be a difficult starting point for the study of Biodynamics as they pre-suppose a knowledge and view of the world based on Steiner’s previous work. Nevertheless, they are extremely important for anyone interested in Biodynamics to tackle. Other books summarizing

Biodynamics have been written and are included in a general bibliography at the end of this Handbook.

Some basic tenets of Biodynamic farming include:

- The creation of a living “farm organism” which is in a stable ecological balance between land, plant life, number and kind of animal, and human work and consciousness
- The importance of creating a healthy soil life for the health of the whole farm
- The use of compost as the basis of fertility
- The use of special sprays and preparations to enliven and balance the farm organism

Biodynamics is not a recipe book. Perhaps its most basic tenet is the need for the farmer to become a sensitive, sensing being, in touch with all of the life active on the farm. Again, through the development of personal abilities, the farmer will be able to intuit solutions to challenges specific to his/her farm and the farm will further grow as an individuality.

## **Other Learning Opportunities**

### **Thursday Morning Breakfast**

This season we are continuing a tradition of inviting our Farm team to join for breakfast for approx. 10 separate sessions. Aside from sharing and enjoying breakfast together, the time will be devoted to answering questions that may arise during the work time relating to Hawthorne Valley, agriculture, Biodynamics, anthroposophy, and anything else that strikes one's interest.

### **The Nature Institute**

We exchange one CSA share with the Nature Institute for six workshop sessions for HVF apprentices during their work time. These include three workshops in the spring about plant observation and three in the fall about animal observation. Each session is about one and a half hours long.

### **The Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training (CRAFT) Program**

HVF is one of the founding members of the original CRAFT program. We expect apprentices to attend each CRAFT event. We create apprentices' work schedules around these events to allow you to participate. CRAFT is an all-volunteer organization. We appreciate and respect the efforts that each farm extends toward educating the CRAFT group apprentices. Please make an effort to read about the CRAFT farms ahead of time and to ask questions the events.

### **Hawthorne Valley Farmscape Ecology Program (FEP)**

There are many walks, tours, and lectures open to the public. Amongst other programs,

the FEP also coordinates a Farmers' Research Circle. See the Hawthorne Valley Farm website ([HawthorneValleyFarm.org](http://HawthorneValleyFarm.org)) for more information on FEP activities. Please put yourself on the *Farm Ecology Program's* email list if you would like announcements of FEPEvents as they come up (email Conrad Vispo at [Conrad@HawthorneValleyFarm.org](mailto:Conrad@HawthorneValleyFarm.org)).

### **The North American Biodynamic Apprenticeship Program (NABDAP)**

For those of you who find yourselves interested in the ideas behind Biodynamic practices and techniques, please ask about the possibility of joining the NABDAP. This program offers a structured way to become increasingly proficient in BD agriculture through hands on and classroom experiences. As a HVF apprentice, you are already fulfilling some of the requirements for this program. Further, the farm offers partial payment towards the classroom portion of the work. If you are interested, please ask at the HVF Learning Center for more information on this program.

### **The Farm Beginnings Program**

The Hudson Valley Farm Beginnings Program, also run by the HVF Learning, Center, helps aspiring and practicing farmers to: create detailed goals, to strategically plan for the growth of their farming enterprises, to learn the basic skills around financial planning and marketing, and to look at various land tenure options. In addition to 7 class sessions, there are also private mentoring sessions with a farmer of one's choosing and 4 field days on local farms. The Farm Beginnings Program starts in late October and ends in late winter. Please ask at the Learning Center for more information.

### **Events Around Town**

The Farm Staff will make an effort to keep the apprentice team informed about general upcoming events. However, apprentices are encouraged to keep their eyes and ears open to the many activities that spring up in our community. We encourage you to look at bulletin boards, read local papers, and ask around about what's happening.

## **Additional Information (subject to change and clarification)**

**Housing:** Current housing is the farm bunkhouse located above the Creamery. Each apprentice has his or her own bedroom and share a kitchen, living space and two bathrooms. Because of its location, the bunkhouse can be noisy and hot. All utilities are paid by the farm except long distance phone. Everyone is responsible for making their own food. Products made or grown on the farm (milk, cheese, bread, yogurt, quark, meat and seasonal vegetables) are shared when available. The farm provides cleaning supplies, basic kitchen supplies and basic bedroom furniture.

**Pets:** Pets are not allowed in the Bunkhouse

**Farm Gear:** Please have a functioning watch, pocketknife, clothing appropriate for all weather and work (including rain pants/jacket).

**Music and Phones:** Playing music and wearing earphones should not disrupt work and be OK'd with the manager you are working with. Use of cell phones for personal business is discouraged and should be minimal.

**Drugs/Alcohol:** Possession and/or use of and illegal substance while on the property of Hawthorne Valley Association and Farm will result in immediate termination. Consumption of alcohol during work hours or attending work under the influence will result in immediate termination. Alcoholic beverages consumed in the off-work hours must be consumed responsibly.

**Food Discounts and Pre-Orders:** Everyone receive a 10% discount on all store products. There is also a bulk pre-order system in place at the store through United Natural Foods. Ask a store employee for more information for how this works.

**Cleanliness:** As farmers we have a very special relationship to dirt. We may carry soil, manure, straw, and dust with us wherever we go. This farm is embedded in a community with many other activities. When entering the Farm store, the offices above the store, the School, the Dining hall, the Learning Center, the Finance Office..., we ask that you be mindful of dusting yourself off, cleaning or removing your boots, etc. We also recognize that it is difficult to keep out this "farminess" from the Bunkhouse! Everyone is expected to participate in Bunkhouse cleaning chores.

Two areas in which cleanliness is especially critical are the Dairy Processing Plant and the Milk Tank Room. We need to always enter these areas through the Farm Milk House where we can hose off any contamination from our boots. Further, the CSA Room must also be kept very clean—we cannot bring any manure near where harvested vegetables may be. Your help in our cleanliness efforts will be greatly appreciated!

**Schedules and Pay:** The length of the farm day varies during the course of the year. Generally we organize the work in such a way that we work approx. 50-60 hours per week during the summer months, less in the winter. This includes a certain amount of weekend work. There are two breaks during the course of the day: one for breakfast and one for lunch. We hold a weekly meeting with all farm co-workers. More details about the daily and weekly schedule will be discussed during the orientation at the beginning of the season. Farm Apprentices receive a total monthly stipend of \$550.00 for the initial training period, then goes up to \$650 for the rest of the season. Advanced Apprentices receive a monthly stipend of \$900.00 for the training period, then \$1000 per month for the rest of the season.

**Time Off:** All time off needs to be scheduled and approved in advance. A three day weekend may be taken off after Labor day weekend through 20 October. Any extra days off for special reasons need to be cleared with manager and scheduled ahead of time.

**Requirements:** All Apprentices are required to keep a journal. We encourage observation

of weather, activities, learning, use of equipment, questions and self reflection. Journal and notes are an excellent way to keep track of external and internal changes as you go through the year as well as skills you have acquired.

## **Resource List for Further Reading**

### **About Food and Culture:**

Culture and Horticulture, by Wolf D. Storl -a great intro and more about Biodynamics

Wild Fermentation, by Sandor Katz

Fast Food Nation by Eric Schlosser

The Omnivore's Dilemma, by Michael Pollan, or anything by Michael Pollan

Consumed: Why Americans Love, Hate and Fear Food by Michelle Stacey

Field Notes From a Catastrophe: Man, Nature and Climate Change, by Elizabeth Kolbert

Salt: A World History by Mark Kurlansky

Why Grassfed is Best by Jo Robinson

Cabbage: Cures to Cuisine by Judith Hiatt

Nutrition and Health, Two Lectures to Workmen by Rudolf Steiner

One United Harvest, Creative Recipes from America's Community Supported Farms, collected by Julie Sochaki

### **About Vegetable Growing:**

Any of the books by Elliot Coleman

Anything written by Vernon Grubinger, University of Vermont vegetable extension agent

The Knotts vegetable book, a comprehensive survey of vegetables and growing them

The Northeast Cover Crop Handbook, by Marianne S something (this book is in the bunkhouse library)

Biodynamic Greenhouse Management by Heinz Grotzke

All About Weeds by Edwin Rollin Spencer

Seed to Seed by Suzanne Ashworth

Sharing the Harvest, A Guide to Community Supported Agriculture by Elizabeth Henderson

### **About Agriculture:**

Anything by Temple Grandin, ie Animals Make Us Human

Secrets of the Soil by Christopher Tompkins and Peter Byrd

The Unsettling of America, Culture and Agriculture by Wendell Berry

Biodynamic Agriculture, by Willy Schilthuis

Principles of Biodynamic Spray and Compost Preparations, by Manfred Klett

Soil Fertility, by E. Pfeiffer

Extraordinary Plant Qualities for Biodynamics, by Jochen Boehemuhl and Kari Jarvinen

Awakening to Landscape by Jochen Bockemuhl

Agriculture by Rudolf Steiner

The Fatal Harvest Reader, the Tragedy of Industrial Agriculture edited by Andrew Kimbrell

Biodynamic Agriculture: Practical Applications of the Biodynamic Method by Koepf, Petterson, Schaumann

The Biodynamic Farm by Herbert H. Koepf

Weather and Cosmos, by Dennis Klocek

**Miscellaneous:**

The E-Myth by Michael Gerber

The Legal Guide For Direct Farm Marketing, by Neil D. Hamilton at the Drake University Agricultural Law Center, in Iowa

Sermons in Stone, the stone walls of New England, by Susan Allport

Written in Stone, A Geological History of the Northeastern United States by Chet Raymo

**Other Resources:**

The New England Small Farms Institute, MA

Regional Farm and Food Project, Albany NY

Just Foods, NYC

New England Vegetable and Berry Conference

State Extension offices, Cornell University Research and Umass websites

CRAFT notebooks and website

NOFA organizations, National or Regional Organic Farming Association

ATTRA website

Biodynamic Association website

The Rodale Institute

Growing for Market, publication

Biodynamics, quarterly publication