

Rag & Frass Farm Apprentice Handbook

(last updated 11/2024)

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Welcome

Thanks for your interest in our farm!

This is a lengthy document, and we know it.

Some of the content may be obvious and common sense. A lot of this is based on specific experiences of ours, and input from other farms/ previous workers. What we have found is that happiness and success on the farm relies on finding a good match. This requires getting on the same page with our *expectations*. We honor that everyone comes with a wide range of what they would like to get out of their farm experience and we've spent years figuring out what matters and works for us, and what we are able to offer. We hope this handbook helps you become familiar with our farm operation, compensation, housing, and expectations so you can determine if we are a good fit for each other.

Please read it carefully and completely before applying!

Who runs the farm?

We, Julia and Brandon (along with 3 year old Rye), own and run Rag & Frass Farm year round with the help of 1-2 part-time workers (who live off the farm). Seasonally we also employ up to 3 full-time apprentices to work with us, bringing our crew to 5 or 6 people depending on the time of year.



Apprentices are usually new and aspiring farmers who want to learn the ins and outs of this lifestyle and business. We like to take a few special folks under our wing for a full season (March-Nov), show them everything we know, get a ton of work done, and essentially provide the beginning stage of what will hopefully be an ongoing mentorship and relationship with farming.

Julia's primary role is managing the day to day activities including fieldwork, tractor work, harvest, markets, and office work. Brandon's main role is special projects, equipment maintenance, grounds maintenance, and construction. Brandon and Julia both switch off with childcare, though Rye is usually at daycare M-F during work hours. Saturday Rye usually hangs with Rye while Julia harvests, and Sundays usually Rye rides with Julia to market.

Brandon assists with fieldwork and harvests as needed, and Julia assists on projects when needed. Prior to farming, Julia was educated in fine art (printmaking and metal sculpture), and also enjoyed activism, philosophy, and science. Brandon was trained as a mechanic and can fix most things, and enjoys extremely spicy foods, working on cars, dirtbikes, electronics, construction, and the fine art of grilling. Brandon also works off the farm a few times a year (6-8 weeks in spring and 6 weeks in fall) as an industrial mechanic at nuclear power plants. He is usually gone the month of April and October every year. During the times when Brandon is working out of town, Julia's schedule changes to allow for additional childcare and increased farming delegation.

In addition to Julia and Brandon, Lena White (they/them) has worked on the farm for 4 years and is starting their own micro dairy farm on the back part of the land. See the "Three Teater Farm Update" section for more info!

2025 FarmBaby Update

In December 2021 our farm and family entered a new chapter with the addition of our baby, Rye. It has been extremely difficult at times and also extremely rewarding and amazing.

We have three years of parenthood experience behind us, and we are 100% positive that we are still unprepared for what this next year will look like. What we know is that Rye is a very sweet, social, and happy kiddo who adds humor, balance, and perspective to our work. He loves to engage with everyone on the farm, and we believe this enriches his life and hope it enriches our team's experience too.

To make farming with a toddler work we continually need to be flexible and willing to adjust our expectations (of ourselves and from the farm) as our child's needs and abilities change. We are practicing being comfortable with plans *not going completely to plan*. Having an amazing and supportive team has made it possible (and less scary) to attempt both working the farm and caring for our family. We owe so much to the people who have supported us through the challenges and changes.

So what does farmbaby life look like? Routines are sometimes interrupted, tasks can take longer to finish, as parents we can feel overwhelmed, and we rely on the trust and training of the crew to help run the farm. We will do lots of hands-on training, working together, and communicating on a daily basis, and there will also be delegating and working unsupervised.

Rye goes to daycare M-F from 8 to 4:30, which means sometimes our morning meeting is delayed or start times stagger as one of us drops Rye off. On days Rye doesn't have childcare Brandon usually hangs out with Rye in the morning while Julia is on the farm, and Julia watches Rye in the afternoon, but this is flexible.

There is no expectation that apprentices will participate with childcare. However, apprentices are part of the group of adults our baby interacts with, observes, and enjoys from his earliest memories and we hire with this in mind. We are looking for people that will make great members of our farm team *and* be supportive and understanding members of the 'village' we will have around us as we raise our kid.

Our Farming Practices and Philosophy

We cultivate about 3 acres in veggies, cut flowers, and herbs. We have been certified organic since 2015. This comes with some strict rules that we follow in our production and record keeping.

We care deeply about the earth and our stewardship of the little bit we are lucky to work and live on.

We follow detailed and specific crop rotation and utilize cover crops in the warm and winter seasons to build soil. We believe in conscientious tillage (including strategic no-till and reduced tillage, as well as conventional tillage), compost, vermi-compost, and other strategies to improve our soil health, fertility, weed management, pest and disease resistance. We are proud of our product quality, and our customers have come to expect certain standards from us. High quality is a core part of what we are known for and we are always mindful of this. Likewise, we are mindful that our personal customer service at the market can make or break our customer relationships. We try to go above and beyond to provide outstanding customer service, even after a long day.

At Rag and Frass, our decisions are based on balancing our resources, time, quality, and life goals. We are practical, resourceful, frugal, idealistic, ambitious, and particular. We find that balancing practices that we know work with a willingness to adjust to changes has led to the best results.

Place, Location, History, Legacy

The farm is just outside the city limits of Jeffersonville, Georgia in Twiggs County (you could bike to downtown Jeffersonville in 5 minutes). The city of Jeffersonville has two dollar stores, two gas stations, a hardware store, feed and seed, a small grocery store, a few small restaurants, a laundromat, a health clinic, a liquor store, and a senior center. Population: about 1,500 people. We are in the geographic center of the state, located about 2 hours south of Atlanta, 2 hours from Savannah, and 2.5 hours from Athens. We are in a rural county, half an hour away from the small cities of Macon, Dublin, and Warner Robins, and 45 minutes from Milledgeville. While we use 5 acres of land for our production and infrastructure, our land is over 54 acres of pasture, woods, creek, and pond to explore (as well as some great railroad tracks across the street to go bone hunting!).

Long before our farm was here, and long before the North American continent was colonized by Europeans, this land was inhabited and farmed by the Mvskokvlke (Muscogee/Creek) people and their ancestors. The farm is located 25 miles from the Ocmulgee National Monument, which is one of many sites left from the Mississippian mound builders (800-1600 CE), the ancestors of the Muscogee Nation today, located in Oklahoma. It is believed that this area has been continuously inhabited by humans for over 17,000 years.

The indigenous people from this region were farmers, and in the mid-late Mississippian period (1350-1600) this area was extremely populated with city-towns united under a sophisticated network/confederacy. The collapse of the Mississippian cultures coincides with the first major contacts with European colonists. Since the initial settler-colonialism encounters, there are numerous instances of settler colonists and their descendants taking the land of this region from the indigenous Muscogee/Creek people, including the violent and forced relocation of the indigenous people of the southeastern woodlands (GA) to Oklahoma.

Because the farm is located in this region of historic and vast indigenous agriculture and culture, we often find 'chert' (flint chips and flakes) as well as partial and full points as we work in the field. While finding artifacts feels exciting and special, we ask you also take those times in particular to acknowledge and reflect on the first stewards of this land, the Muscogee/Creek and their ancestors, and their forced separation from their homeland. We have the unearned privilege to farm on and control this land today because we have benefitted from centuries of policy designed to erode sovereignty from indigenous people. We are still figuring out the implications of this reality, and how to farm and live on land in ways that take responsibility and accountability for our role in this legacy.

Currently our farm policy is that everyone leaves any and all of the partial or intact artifacts you may find here on the farm, to remain with the land, until we (based on recommendations and input from the Muscogee/Creek Nation) figure out the most appropriate way to handle them. You may not keep them or sell them. Thank you in advance for respecting this.

Because we farm, and because we farm in America, it is especially important that we consider the history of agriculture in this country and how we participate in that. The power and wealth of this country is a direct result of the racist institution of slavery, and the blood and sweat of many

generations of enslaved people and their descendants. Acknowledging this honestly and staying aware of this truth daily in our work is an important step in dismantling the systemic and institutionalized racism within agriculture and our society at large. We hope apprentices learn to be cognizant of themselves in the context of this history and also to take personal responsibility for making the future of farming equitable and just.

Farming (and food production) is not a choice, it is a necessity. Similar to parenting, farming is critical to our species' survival, but doesn't come with some of the incentives that other critical jobs get (like money, security, widespread cultural appreciation, etc). Because agriculture is hard physical outdoor work, it has often been considered undesirable work. The history and present day of agriculture is interwoven with genocide, forced labor, exploitation and slavery. Entire social and economic systems like feudalism and slavery were built to 'solve' these labor demands, creating and reinforcing deep racism, sexism, and classism in the process. How we participate in farming today matters to how we honor those who came before us and how systems continue to function in the future.

Education/Apprenticeship

An apprenticeship is a system of training where the apprentice learns from an experienced teacher the art and technique of a specific craft or trade, through working alongside them. Apprenticeships are a traditional way for people to learn a craft not passed down from a parent or family member. You invest work and gain knowledge and know-how that can be carried as far as you want to take it (hopefully really far!). Sometimes the knowledge is formally introduced via demonstration or verbal/written information. Sometimes it is gained through feel and 'muscle memory', doing something until it becomes natural and second nature. Much of the knowledge gained from an immersive living apprenticeship is from accumulated *exposure and observation*, similar to learning a second language in another country. Simply by being around other fluent participants, you get a much more complete and nuanced skillset.

We are a small diversified farm that came into existence from trial and error, perseverance, a few educated guesses, and hard-earned lessons. Also a lot of hard work. We are first-generation DIY fake-it-till-you-make-it farmers and that is what we can speak to- starting from nearly nothing and making something and making it grow. This is not the only way, and it is not the easiest way, it is just our experience and what we have to share. We offer apprenticeship because farming needs hands and we want to open doors into farming for others, and we recognize not all new farmers have access to land, money, or skills. There are many farm jobs out there. Rag and Frass offers a farm experience that can help illuminate some of the 'how' in 'how to get it off the ground'. We intend that our apprentices leave here prepared, skilled, inspired, and confident to follow their own farming journeys.

In addition to becoming a part of our team (and all the training that this requires) apprentices have access to our farm library, PowerPoint presentations we have developed and given at conferences, in-depth lessons on crop rotations, office work (record keeping, bookkeeping), group farm tours (we like to go on several per season), as well as one-on-one time tailored to specific interests of apprentices. We have a lot of time for discussion and diving deeper on any topic we have knowledge about, though with a baby sometimes these conversations will happen during work in the field or during mealtimes.

For successful apprenticeship, you need to come into this opportunity with realistic expectations and open minds. **You will get out what you put in**, and we strongly encourage you to consider what you are looking for in your apprenticeship, and communicate this to us in your application. A full season with us is a large expenditure of your time, body, mind, heart; being able and willing to fully apply yourself can make all the difference to the skills and self-understanding you leave with. For many people a full season of farm work is enough to decide whether you want to pursue farming or not. The apprenticeship experience is also usually enough to gain intuition on if a certain scale, production, model, lifestyle, workload/schedule feels like a good fit, or if something different would be more desirable. This is valuable information as it will help guide you to continue or not. Unless you come with prior experience, a single season is not enough time to gain the knowledge or skills to start a farm. If having your own farm is the dream goal, you need to plan on at least 3 years of study, practice, and experience-- at a minimum.

We strongly believe scarcity and abundance must be embraced fully and simultaneously. Working on the farm means being willing to accept the seasons, the weather, cyclical and repetitive chores, changing crops, frustrations, failures, and successes. Farming is a very long slow learning process, the more you know the more nuanced the lessons come. Stretching oneself to accept the reality of limitations will make for a happier, more healthy and successful relationship with farming.

Compensation

We consider a 'full season' to be March through the end of November.

Compensation includes:

1. Hands-on education. It is hard to place a value on this as people get out what they put in. However, we feel working on real functioning farms is the best way to learn to farm, and much cheaper than an agricultural degree, which often still needs real work experience to enable success. Many past apprentices have said their season on the farm has been life changing. Some have continued on

to start their own farms. Some have leaned on us for support or farming advice years after their apprenticeship has ended.

2. Housing, 'farmer food', and utilities (valued at \$500/month)
3. Weekly stipend of \$400 (W2'ed)
4. Discretionary bonuses upon completion of the season and high quality job performance.

The work is hard, and our expectations are high. There are many easier and higher paying jobs out there. We do not recommend people come to work here for the money.

Stipend is paid weekly, and you will be a W2 employee, paid through our payroll service, with taxes taken out for you. Employees are 'at will' and are not under contract. Residency is part of the compensation; employees who quit or are dismissed will not be allowed to continue to reside on the farm.

Who we like to hire

We want to hire and mentor people who have a serious interest in farming for a living, or (if you have never farmed) serious reason to believe that this could be *your vocation*.

Additionally, some attributes and characteristics are important to us, such as conscientiousness, reliability, teachability, flexibility, and adaptability. More important than skills or experience is attitude: enthusiasm, positivity, and teamwork.

We also find that our team is strongest when the individuals have self-awareness, accountability, attention to detail, good communication skills, kindness, and humor! We like tidy, early risers, or people who can happily adapt to these behaviors.

It often takes people several weeks, and sometimes longer, to adjust to work that is physically more demanding and uncomfortable (hot, itchy, hard) than work they are used to. Although strength is an asset in this work, endurance and stamina are much more important, mental endurance being most important of all. We cannot stress this enough—the key to a successful season on our farm lies in your own ability to enjoy the work, despite the inevitable tedium, hot and sweaty activities, or your sore muscles. Not many of our jobs take a lot of strength, but we spend many hours bent over and squatting, and many tasks are repetitive.

We have found the mentality of athletes who want to push and challenge themselves, is a very useful mindset in farming. Remember that farming is not a sprint but an endurance sport, we are not looking to burnout but build efficiency, stamina, and skill sets. Like athletes, as farmers we need to care for our bodies, which are our most important tools! Taking care of your body during work (staying hydrated, bending and lifting with good form, asking for a buddy to help lift)

and outside of work (with stretching, yoga, core strengthening, sleep, etc.) is extremely important.

Work expectations, season, and flow

Work hard, grow good food, love the land.

Our work expectations are based on a few basic ideas:

Firstly, this is our livelihood (not a hobby), so it is important that we take the work seriously enough to succeed in it.

Secondly, as much as possible we want farming to be safe, fulfilling, satisfying, reasonable, and fun! Depending on many factors, some days we have more or less flexibility in meeting these goals; being committed to the big picture and long timeline, even when individual tasks or days don't feel enjoyable, is important.

We believe in holding apprentices to similar standards and routines that we follow, our goal is not to sugar-coat or to 'show how easy it is' to farm. This gives a more realistic picture of what this job involves, and will give you practice in developing realistic relationships to this work. (It will also make you very hireable and desirable at other farms you may approach for work in the future.) We will never ask any worker to do a task that is dangerous, and we will never ask you to do anything we wouldn't (and haven't) done many times. We can't say it enough, farming is a ton of work and responsibility. This is in keeping with the world-wide history of agriculture, across all of civilization and culture, it is nothing new or unique to our farm.

Unlike other jobs, which can neatly fit a 9-5 day, farming rarely fits conveniently into these hours. Some days we finish early, other days we have to work late to get it done. Sometimes we have to do extra work with special urgency, and sometimes we have unexpected hiccups (or 'farm emergencies') to respond to. The crops, weather, and many other factors often dictate our plan and what is required from us, regardless of how we're feeling on any particular day. If there is one thing that sets farmers apart from other types of workers, it is the willingness to accept this reality. (We don't know ANY working farmers who have *never* had to handle some plant/animal/weather/other farm emergency on their day off, when they are sick or broken hearted, etc.). We believe in creating farm boundaries that are healthy for people AND we simultaneously recognize that sometimes those are nice ideas that don't always apply...

Full-time apprentices work six days a week. Everyone works Saturdays (our biggest harvest day), and takes Sundays off (except the person working Sunday market, who gets Monday off instead). After everyone is trained and we hit our stride, we can often shrink Saturday work into

a half day, which is lovely! Additional days off require advanced planning, especially if they fall on big harvest days. Part-time workers are held to the same productivity and quality standards, but will have totally different schedules, and sometimes different responsibilities. Our workdays are usually 7-8ish hrs a day (six days a week), sometimes finishing earlier and occasionally going later. We take an immersive, flexible approach that is based on what needs to get done and coming to good stopping points. In the end, apprentices should expect to regularly work 40-50 hours/week, though as we have created better systems on the farm it is often less than this.

Excessive rain, wind, heat, cold and other inclement weather often increases the amount and urgency of the work. As such, less-than-ideal weather is rarely a reason to stop working. Safety is of course a priority, so in extreme weather (tornado warning or lightning) precautions will be taken. It is not uncommon for us to work in the rain, heat, cold and other potentially uncomfortable weather conditions. In Georgia it is nearly ALWAYS humid, year round. Farming is outdoor work, and we are often synchronizing our activities to the weather and season.

Because we farm in the south, a subtropical climate (zone 8), it is often HOT by most people's standards.

Unlike farms in other regions that have different climatic limitations, **our major limitation is heat**. This means for much of the year, we are getting as much done in the morning as possible when it is cool and plants are hydrated. 90% of the harvesting happens in the morning. As such, **mornings are sacred productivity time**. Harvest mornings are extra important, and we are sticklers for getting everything out of the field before it is too hot to harvest. Due to Georgia's summer heat, late spring, summer, and fall days are often split into two parts, making the hottest part of the day a siesta non-work time. During this primary part of the season, we usually work an early long morning, take several hours off during the heat of the day, and return to the field in the evening and work till 'dusk or done'.

It is important to realize we are morning people. In our operation, timeliness is absolutely critical, and again, **mornings are sacred**. We expect everyone to manage their own time and rest so that they can be high functioning and punctual every AM. Our start time adjusts seasonally, but you need to come to work dressed and fed, carrying whatever you need to get through until lunch. During hot months, we *require* workers to carry a water bottle to the field, and we strongly recommend this year round. We want workers to take water breaks often, and we don't want you to have to walk more than 200' feet to get to the water. There are many spigots all over the farm and we want you to use them! This is about safety *and* efficiency.

For general 10 minute breaks (bathroom, snacks, stretching, smoking, sitting in shade, etc) we like not having to have a policy on when or how often you take them. We want you to take them when you need them, and not need us to micromanage them for you. However, efficiency is important, and we expect frequency and duration to be reasonable (not right after we start work, not every 30 mins, not right before we break for lunch, etc). If we feel the lack of formal break policy becomes a problem or is being abused, we will create a policy midseason. During harvest, or any other time sensitive activity, we expect the task to be completed, or

'appropriately paused' before a short break. For example, produce should never be left in the field or on a table if it needs to be cooled or is hot out- it should either be hydrocooled in water, or in the walk-in before you leave it to take a break. Likewise, plants that have been recently transplanted need to have irrigation put on them and the greenhouse needs to be watered *before* you walk away for lunch. Whenever possible, we like tasks to be completed before short breaks and especially before full meals.

As a small and busy farm, we love to use lists and try to stick to them. Productivity is important, whether or not a task is enjoyable. We try to keep things interesting, but farm work is often hard, tedious and repetitive. Everyone needs to find ways to enjoy what they are doing and to continue to do it well. We have a low tolerance for moping and whining, especially since we choose to do this work, and so do you!

Lastly, in addition to everyone on the crew being productive, timely, and pleasant to be around, the farm operates better (and is more enjoyable to work on) when it is tidy, well maintained, and tools are in the right place. Like all working farms this takes a conscious effort, commitment, and sometimes a thorough double-down. During the very busiest times things tend to slip a little, which is why we try to minimize the chaos with some simple daily guidelines:

- **Tasks need to be completed, and completion involves cleanup.** For example, this means you are not done in the packing shed until harvest bins are washed and drying. This also means you are not done weeding in the high tunnel until the weed piles in the aisle are gathered up and taken to the compost. This ensures we are always trying to leave spaces ready for the next person/day/task. Often a few minutes at the end of a task saves us more time when we come back to it next time, and is much less frustrating!
- **Tools are put back in place after use.** We never leave hand tools, walkie-talkies, snips, harvest totes, etc in the field. As we finish tasks, we put tools away right after, even if we think we are coming back to it later. This ensures when people go to get a tool, it is right where it belongs. It also means expensive or important tools don't get forgotten, rained on, or lost. If you are not sure where something goes, ask us! We are never done for the day until everything is put back where it belongs.
- **If you see something that needs to be done, do it.** If you see something that is out of place, put it back, even if you did not leave it out. If you see trash on the ground, put it in the trash can. If you see something that looks wrong (thirsty plant, sick animal, irrigation leak, broken fence, etc), say something to a manager right away. This ensures we are all moving about the farm with a sense of care, observation, and responsibly. It also means we are not assuming someone else is aware of or taking care of it.

Weekly Schedule and where we sell

We have multiple sales outlets throughout the week, structured with local Middle GA sales mid-week, and metro Atlanta sales on Sunday:

Wednesday- Jeffersonville and Macon sales (Poplar Street Farmer's Market, farmstand, pre-order pickup, restaurant delivery)

Sunday- Atlanta sales (Grant Park Farmers Market, pre-order pickups, sometimes restaurant delivery)

A lot of our week is devoted to harvest, market prep, and market. This means we try to be very strategic about our precious 'farm-work' time. Our market and sales schedule often dictates our harvest. It always dictates market prep, which also includes packing orders from our online store (for home delivery or pickup). Sales days are set in stone in our week, and so are the correlating harvest/pack days, usually Tuesday/Weds and Friday/Saturday. These days are rain or shine, and we fit our farming activities around these fixtures of our week. Harvest mornings/market prep time is sacred!

We will most often work as a group in the mornings, usually working 4-5 hours before lunch. After lunch we will typically work another 1-3 hours, though the timing of this will depend on the time of year, weather, and task. Sometimes we will do a few hours right after lunch, other times when it is hot we will take a longer break and do a few hours in the evening. We will determine the schedule for the day and the week loosely as a group as we have weekly team field walks and morning meetings. Due to childcare and depending on the task, evening/afternoon work may be more independent than morning work.

Basic Weekly Schedule:

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Apprentice Day off	Farm	Harvest	Harvest/ Pack orders	Farm	Harvest	Harvest / Pack orders
Grant Park Market (Atlanta)	Farm Chores	Farm	Farm stand (Jeffersonville) Poplar Street Farmers Market	Farm Chores	Farm	Household chores (half day off)

			(Macon)			
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**The above schedule is an overall schedule for farm operations. Apprentices will have one full day off, and typically it is Sunday. When there are chores that need to get done on days off we (watering livestock and watering greenhouses, etc) and we create schedules to cover these tasks.*

Time off

Everyone gets a paid week off in August, when summer feels oppressive and has started to take its toll on the crops and people. This is an opportunity to regroup and relax before the final months of the season, and generally the entire month is a bit more relaxed as we wrap up summer and start fall prep. When possible, we like to institute “farming in the morning ONLY” for the month of August, in addition to a paid week off. This means we get fall started but also have a little lightening of the load.

During particularly busy times of the year when large events are scheduled (ex: weddings, mother’s day, spring planting, height of tomato season, etc) additional time off requests can be very difficult to accommodate (especially without notice). We try to accommodate everyone’s needs as much as possible but the more communication and notice you give us, the better able we are to accommodate requests for time off.

***Time off for family or other emergency situations will be accommodated to the best of our ability. In the event an apprentice needs to end the apprenticeship mid-season due to emergency circumstances, we will do our best to be supportive and would appreciate as much advance notice as possible as it can be very difficult to replace workers mid-season.*

Sick Days

We don’t like to set or limit sick/mental health days, but we don’t expect people to need more than a handful in a season, unless there are extenuating circumstances. If people need a full sick day, this should ideally be communicated (call out) before work starts or with as much notice as possible so we can adjust our plans. No call/no show is not acceptable. We want farming to be sustainable for the people, so please communicate with us if you are not feeling well, so we can adjust as a team.

Likewise, while we appreciate when people want to 'push through' and help get things done, please let us know if you are not feeling well so we can help determine a plan. We would rather you rest and recover rather than burn out.

Driving Policy

Apprentices will have an opportunity to sell at the market if they choose. Some apprentices may also become drivers to market/delivery. If apprentices will drive a farm vehicle will be put on our vehicle insurance, and subject to the following driving policy. (Please let us know if you are not comfortable being a driver.)

If you are in an accident while driving a farm vehicle and you are not at fault, the farm insurance will cover any damage. If you are at fault, you may be asked to pay the deductible of our policy. If you get a ticket for doing something illegal, you pay the ticket. If you are ticketed because the vehicle is illegal, we pay the ticket.

Employees may not be under the influence of drugs or alcohol while working or while driving any farm vehicles or equipment. This is common sense, but do not jeopardize our business by doing or transporting anything illegal in any farm vehicle at any time.

Housing and amenities

The housing we provide is very unique and unusual. Because the farm was started on a shoestring budget, it has taken years (and will take years more) of renovation, investment, and fixing to bring the buildings closer to 'normal' standards. The buildings themselves are old, and are fixer-uppers. The main structure is a brick motel, with each room opening directly to a courtyard. The motel was built in 1940, and has not been updated.

We would describe the housing as 'very rustic', or maybe like 'cozy squatting'. Every apprentice will have their own room (motel style, with their own entrance), lightly furnished with a bed, fan, dresser, limited electricity (light, power strip), bedding, and lamp. There is AC in the bedrooms only, no central heat. Each room originally had a bathroom, none of which are working (they are closed off), and there is no indoor plumbing except for the kitchen and bathroom sink. Wifi is accessible in all the rooms and buildings on the farm.

The bathroom is shared and uses a composting toilet. While this is certainly an adjustment for some people, it is not unpleasant. The shower is in the greenhouse (it is actually lovely and very enjoyable, equipped with privacy, hot water, and plants). Julia and Brandon live in a small house next to the farm, but lived in the motel with the few accommodations for many years— it can be done!

The kitchen is the main shared indoor space, and is the most utilized room. We do a lot of cooking, eating, feasting, and food preservation. Like the rest of the building, it is not updated, but has served us well for years. It is not large, but is equipped with an oven/stove, sink, fridge, pantry, and lots of kitchen utensils and tools.

We do have a washer and dryer on the farm for apprentice use.

Other farm buildings include the packing shed, the barn, the 'store' (which houses our two walk-in coolers).

Our housing is very humble, apprentices need to be adaptable, hearty, or both to enjoy it. We often joke that the veggies have it better than us, which for now, is true. Most systems and ways of living in the space have been optimized, and we have posted guidelines to ensure the space remains comfortable. Please read and abide by the signs in the kitchen and bathroom so that everything stays comfortable and functional.

Food and Meals

We really like eating food. We often have a lot of it, and we love to cook. We have found that people who enjoy cooking, eat vegetables, and who are 'adventurous' eaters are the happiest eaters on the farm.

While the food routines vary year to year with the crew, folks usually do their own thing for breakfast. Lunch is sometimes a group effort or a solo endeavor. Dinners routines are developed by the group, and often we create a weekly dinner schedule so on certain days of the week a different person makes dinner for the group while everyone works in the field (this has made it possible to work in the cool evenings and not eat dinner at 10pm, and is a rotational treat!) or just doesn't have to cook. Julia and Brandon will also cook and host dinners at their house, and join in a meal at the farm. The food routines are meant to be fun, comfortable, and work for those involved— no pressure, stress, or obligation. Many apprentices who come love to cook and are excellent at it, but you don't need to be a chef; just cook what and how you like and it will be appreciated after a long day of work! Our dinner rotation means we can share the work and feel like we are eating out! This has also been one of the best ways for us all to learn to use foods in new ways and styles, and has become a really fun and special part of our farm.

We hold kitchen tidiness next to godliness. We expect people to clean up their dishes and after themselves. When we do rotating dinners, the person who cooks dinner is responsible for cleaning up from the dinner process, with the eaters just cleaning their personal dishes.

We want you to enjoy the fruits of your labor, and we ask you to be conscientious of the supply. Our policy is we mostly eat what we can't sell, and don't eat what is very precious (the very first or last of something, the perfect undamaged fruits, etc). 'Farmer food' is anything in overabundance/surplus or is 'seconds' quality, and is free and for the taking. We encourage you to indulge in the seasonal changing abundance! If it's unclear if something is for the taking, just ask.

In addition to unlimited 'farmer food', we supply some shared kitchen staples (salt, condiments, cooking, oil, seasoning, etc). Apprentices will have a normal-sized fridge in the kitchen, but we do have extra designated space in the walk-ins if more is needed.

It is also important to remember that we live in a rural place, and not a place where 'the good food movement' has become normalized. We do have a small grocery store in town but selection is limited. Avocados, specialty grains, fancy coffee, fresh mozzarella, and anything 'organic' will be at least 30 miles away from one of the bigger grocery stores.

Living on the Farm

In addition to work rules, we have house rules.

Apprentices are guests. You will become a part of our household and farm family for a season. This means you will interact with us, our pets, our possessions, and our space. This provides a unique immersive lifestyle experience (and a very short commute to work), ability to easily escape the heat mid-day, and an understanding of the behind the scenes and on-call nature of farming. We want all apprentices to feel comfortable and at home (and we want to feel at home too) and to ensure this we have some boundaries and expectations:

Ø Shared Space

- Working and living together is a lot of 'together'. Mindfulness and respect for other people's use of the shared space is very important to everyone getting along.
- Noise late at night, early in the am, or when people are sleeping should be minimized. Ya know, basic courtesy stuff.
- **We are sticklers about people leaving the space tidy and ready for the next person, especially in the kitchen, which gets a lot of daily use.** It is a small space, and sloppiness will not be tolerated as it can

create conflict and invite insects and rodents. We expect people to wash up their dishes within half an hour of eating, not leaving them in the sink or on the counters.

- We want to foster habits where people are able to come to shared spaces and get right to task (without having to clean up first) and this involves everyone leaving spaces ready for others.
- In our warm climate we are naturally prone to unwanted insect pests (ants, roaches, spiders, etc) and we like to keep a very tidy kitchen to prevent infestations. (Even a single crumb or drop of peanut butter on the kitchen counter can be swarmed by invasive ants 1 hour later in high summer.) *The amount of vigilance it takes to keep ants at bay is akin to camping with food in 'bear country'. During ant season if you leave crumbs and food wrappers in your car or room, you can expect to come back to them a day later covered in ants that are extremely difficult to get rid of.*
- Housework is a shared responsibility and there will be designated whole group chore times, as well as daily tidying.
- Because the farm is a shared living space (and a small one), we expect apprentices to inform others when there will be guests or friends over so people can feel prepared and informed. If the group decides this becomes unnecessary, we can come up with a different policy through group discussion. If a larger gathering is being coordinated, please take the time to discuss and plan with others so that everyone's space, privacy, and comfort levels are being considered.

Ø Respect

- We expect people to treat our space, furniture, tools, kitchenware, art, books, pets, and each other with respect.
- Please do not damage our tools and furniture, treat them as if you paid for them. Many of our household items are sentimental, or were handmade by friends. If you accidentally break something, please tell us.
- Do not make permanent changes to the space without getting approval.
- Do not feed our pets without permission. Please open gates carefully and close gates fully to keep our pets safe.
- Much of this is very common sense, but if we see disrespect of our things, space, animals, or people, we will say something. Of course there are certain things we have zero tolerance for (harming pets or people, threatening, stealing, vandalizing space, repeated intentional disrespect of rules, etc.)

Ø Leave no trace

- When you leave or complete your apprenticeship, we expect you to deep clean your room and leave your space as you found it (we always deep clean every room before someone's arrival). You may have accumulated

things but you may not leave them here without permission. Leave your room and the farm with 'no trace' which means you either take everything with you, donate it to goodwill, or throw it away at the dump. Please do not leave heaps (or even small heaps) of things for us to deal with. If you leave your room a mess, it will affect any final bonus you would have been given.

Ø Smoking

- Smoking is NOT permitted inside any farm vehicle, building, the fields, greenhouses, packing shed or in any proximity to food items being sold or produced. You can smoke in the courtyard, or near the fire pit only. Cigarette butts should be put out and thrown in the trash.
- Smokers must wash their hands thoroughly after smoking before continuing any farm work. This is a requirement to prevent potential spread of tobacco mosaic virus to our crops.
- Smokers should be taking the same amount of break time as non-smokers, being a smoker should not impact your work.

Safety

Farming is considered a dangerous profession. The type and scale of farming we do is fairly safe compared to others, but because we are outdoors, using our bodies and tools, and in the elements, there is risk. We take safety seriously, and will make you aware of hazards throughout the season.

We also take some basic precautions:

- You must wear shoes while working on the farm.
- You need to wear **closed-toe shoes** anytime you are using the tilthers, shovels, digging forks, broadforks, or working with power tools, or working with livestock.
- In the event that we approve you to use power tools, you will need to wear Personal Protective Equipment (eye and ear protection), and potentially other protective clothes (steel toe boots, chaps, gloves, etc).
- We rarely train first year apprentices to use tractors, mowers, chainsaws, or other more dangerous and expensive equipment. When we do, it is if we decide you are 1) ready and 2) have *earned it*. We reserve the right, in our sole discretion, to teach and authorize the use of expensive and/or dangerous equipment, or not.
- Do not go into the cow pastures without permission and training. Our cattle have long horns and can injure you.

- Watch where you step! We do not often have snakes (because of the dogs), but rattlesnakes and other poisonous snakes DO exist in this area, and they have been seen on the farm from time to time. There are also poisonous spiders, which carry a very low (but present) risk.
- **One of the most overlooked and hidden dangers is the sun, heat, and dehydration.** Heat exhaustion is common and *we will be on your case daily* to drink water (and electrolytes), wear hats, and get out of the sun in the heat of the day. We consider this hazard to be one of the most dangerous, common, preventable, and easily overlooked until it is too late. Symptoms often do not fully express themselves until 1-2 days later. Heat stress and exhaustion can affect anyone, no one is 'immune' or 'used' to it, even after years of farming. We are vigilant about this because we have seen firsthand how dangerous it is.
- Generally, we will always be looking out for your safety, but if you feel uncomfortable, nervous, or unsafe doing something, you must speak up!

Harassment and Non-discrimination

We have a zero tolerance policy for any harassment or discrimination, including but not limited to ethnic, racial, or sexual harassment or discrimination based on sexual orientation. Actions, overtures, or remarks involving ethnic, racial, or religious animosity, or any unwanted conduct of a sexual nature will not be tolerated.

All workers have the responsibility to bring any form of harassment to the manager's attention. Workers who report harassment will not be subject to reprisal and the farm will investigate the incident promptly and in as confidential a manner as possible. If it is determined that someone engaged in harassment, disciplinary action will be taken. Harassment can be a legal matter and the processes of this handbook are not a substitute for the legal process to which every individual is entitled.

Again, on the farm we have a general zero tolerance policy for bigotry, racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, or any other hurtful or hateful ideology. Any action or language that seeks to hurt, harm, or intimidate people will not be tolerated. Any violence, or threats of violence, will result in immediate termination.

Illegal Activity/Drugs and Alcohol

We can't allow illegal activity on the farm. Please use common sense.
Don't let your personal decisions or alcohol consumption negatively impact your work or others.

You may never work or drive under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Period.

Weapons

We have a strict NO FIREARMS policy on the farm.**

Bringing (or allowing visitors to bring) unauthorized firearms here could result in immediate termination.

(**With the single exception of specific friends who we *expressly allow* to hunt on the back part of the land when in season. In the event that we allow friends to hunt, everyone on the farm will be made aware so we can keep workers safe.)

Hints, Tips, Do's and Don'ts

These are just some easy hints about things we are particular about. All of these are derived from specific experiences, we are listing them for a reason.

- When driving onto the farm, open the gate, pull through just enough to get through, and close the gate before parking. Do not leave gates wide open planning to walk back to close them, people forget and dogs can (and have) run out and been hit by cars.
- No tunnel or greenhouse should ever be closed while the sun is out, even for 5 mins. If it is sunny and raining, leave them OPEN. If you are leaving the farm unattended and it is raining, or might rain, or raining on and off, leave them OPEN. It is better to have rain get inside than to have them closed when the sun comes out unexpectedly! A closed tunnel on a sunny day is the fastest way to kill everything inside. We have learned this the hard way.
- Watering the greenhouse, and opening and closing high tunnels is one of the MOST IMPORTANT TASKS we do. Doing it correctly (and on time) is a matter of life or death for the plants. We use greenhouse sprinklers on a timer now (so we don't hand water everyday) but for them to function properly other irrigation must be off!
- If you feel thirsty, you are already dehydrated. Drink water BEFORE you feel thirsty. We live in a very hot climate, you should have a water bottle with you whenever you are working in the field.

- When you get back from the market or from harvesting, the priority is getting perishable items into refrigeration.
- If you are not sure where or how to store something in the walk-in (open or closed, covered or uncovered), ask. Different types of produce need to be stored in different ways.
- On some tasks we are working thoroughly and delicately. On other tasks we are hurrying or doing something 'good enough'. If you are not sure, ask for clarification.
- Keeping things alive is our job! 'Not feeling like it' or 'it being my day off' is never an excuse not to do necessary tasks, especially as they relate to water and keeping things alive!
- Please clean up after yourself, clean up your workspace, and take a few minutes to make sure everything has been put away.
- Everyone should grab a walkie talkie first thing in the AM, before heading to your task.
- There are lots of signs around the farm explaining what to do or what not to do. Read them, and hold yourself accountable.
- Have patience – learning is not immediate. Farming takes time, an experienced grower of 30 years has only grown watermelon 30 times! Sometimes learning a particular skill/technique will not be immediate, since some things are seasonal.
- We want to know what you are curious about! If you want to learn about pvc pipe and irrigation, you need to make sure we know your interest!
- Learn to work while you talk! We want you to enjoy your work and be able to have fun and deep conversations but it's imperative that you continue working while doing so. (This does not always come naturally. Literally everyone does this sometimes so do not get offended when we remind you to keep working.)
- When heading up from the field or back down, let your teammates know in case they need something and you can save them a trip.
- Say something if something doesn't look right. Is there a funny looking fence? A cow standing in the strawberries? Somewhere gushing water? A plant looking sick?-- tell us so we can fix it!
- Use your power of observation! This is a built-in farming muscle you need to exercise. Ask questions, we are here to share what we know and we love talking about farming. Practice your intuition, does a plant look really good or bad? Why?
- Don't stand around, the majority of the time there are plenty of things to do. The small things add up, and we love to see people take initiative!

What to bring:

- Work clothes
 - Julia likes loose fitting shirts, spandex leggings, and leather boots without laces. Brandon likes loose fitting shirts, real work pants, and boots or clogs.
 - Light colored shirts will keep you cooler. Consider loose long sleeves for the sun.
 - Your work clothes will get really dirty and sweaty. It is nice to have enough changes of work clothes for a full week.
 - You will need a lot of socks.
 - Layers are great for GA, sometimes it is chilly in mornings or evenings but HOT in the day.
 - Think about what it is comfy to bend, squat, and kneel in.
- Footwear
 - Rubber rain boots (for rain, and packing shed) are a MUST!
 - Work boots (leather) are great because they breathe more than rubber boots but keep you dry with dewy wet grass (which is every morning). Also consider some boots without laces so it is easy to get in and out of them.
 - Sneakers, or light hiking boots
 - Some type of light, airy shoe or sandal (the ever-stylish croc has become unexpectedly popular on the farm). It is really nice to have shoes that can easily slip on and off to keep your spaces mud-free.
- Rain gear
 - A raincoat is a must. Rain boots are a must.
 - Rain pants will be provided by the farm.
 - Think about it raining all day, then picture doing work outside in the rain. The clothes you would want to have on are what you need!
 - People who wear glasses should try to find a wide brimmed rain hat to help with visibility when working in the rain.
- Sun protection
 - Wide brimmed hat (we mean WIDE) is necessary.
 - Sunglasses
 - Sunscreen
 - Lightweight long sleeved button down shirts or special UV sun protection shirts
- Water bottle (should be on the larger capacity side)
- Vehicle, bike (optional, but nice!)
- Books, crafts, etc (whatever you need to feel at home, comfortable, entertained, and creative)
- Toiletries, bug spray (if you are sensitive to bugs, get strong bug spray)
- Special food items (can't live without your acai berry extract? Best to bring that along.)
- Computer (useful)
- Extra fan (people who bring extra fans usually use them)
- Headlamp
- Pocket knife (this will not be your primary harvest tool, just handy to have)

- Gloves. We don't work in gloves often, but it is good to have your own pair of lightweight (not leather) gloves that fit you.
- Kitchen stuff you can't live without: we are pretty well stocked, but (for example) if you love to bake and you have specific things you need or like to use, bring em
- Party outfit (we do have fun)
- Towels (we don't provide towels unless you need us to)
- Bedding (if you like): we do have sheets and bedding for all the rooms, however, some people like to bring their own blankets and bedding. We encourage this, just let us know if you need us to provide or you plan to use your own.

What not to bring:

- Pets (sorry, we have learned a lot of lessons on this)
- Guns.
- Illegal stuff.
- Giant pieces of furniture (without talking with us about it first!)

Three Teater Farm Update:

Lena White (they/them) has worked with us on the farm and for the Middle GA Grower's Coop for years, but their farming passion is not veggies and flowers, it's dairy cows. Lena is in the process of starting a micro-dairy on the back of our land, so we are adding their farm updates to our handbook as we start navigating having a second small farm on the property.

This means we are creating clear boundaries for how apprentices can enjoy the back of the land and pond while respecting Lena's home boundaries and rented farm space.

Shortly after apprentices arrive and before 'turning you out to pasture' we will go over the property lines and the access route to the pond. We want to ensure that Lena's space and privacy is maintained, and also that no one is trespassing on the neighbors (who hunt AND who we try to maintain good relationships with.)

As fencing and animals are added this will be updated!

Phew, thank you for taking the time to read this; you have made it to the end!

We have created this document with the intention of clearly and accurately communicating the culture of the farm and what joining our seasonal team entails. We do this because we sincerely want great applicants who want to be here fully informed and with few illusions, set up for success. It will be hard, but that doesn't mean it can't also be good.

From hosting apprentices over the years we have learned a lot, had a lot of fun, and we have developed many long term friendships and mentorships with past apprentices. We really enjoy sharing our passion for farming, and believe deeply that despite the hard work, this work is powerful, worthy, and important.