

2007 Farm Application

Farm Name: Hope Seeds & Perennials (HSP)

Farmer(s): Andrea Berry

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Number of apprentices sought: 1

Our farm can host couples/small family: Yes No x

We are interested in hosting a Farming Organically Workshop. Yes x No

Section A: Farm Description

1. **Area Description:** Describe the area around your farm (ie. landscape, local attractions) and the community in which you're located.

HSP is in a beautiful, remote rural location – very woody and isolated. I'm based in the tiny hamlet of Forreston (about 4 houses!), 2.5 km down a dirt road from the 107 highway. The 15 acre property of woods and cleared/cultivated land is bordered on the East by the Miramichi River, and surrounded on all other sides by forest. HSP is located at the entrance to a network of "woods roads and trails" accessed by snowmobilers, ATV and horseback riders, and hikers. The closest towns are Juniper (with a convenience store, couple of restaurants, post office and local pub – a real sawmill/rural town experience) at 12 km away and Glassville (convenience store, post office, local recreation centre with community events) at 15 km away. I have a great dog – Gus – and 2 cats – Phil and Bad Cat – that provide much amusement and companionship.

2. **Farm Description:** Include a brief history, crops or livestock, size of farm, main activities, etc.

HSP has been situated on South Ridge for the past 3 years, and a transition of the property has been progressing. 2007 will be the first year that HSP will be a full-time venture for me, aided by the merger with Rawlinson Garden Seed. HSP produces and sells organic, heritage and open-pollinated garden seed. The goal is to source as much seed from local growers (since I can't produce it all myself!), which involves maintaining and building a close network of growers with seed production interest and experience.

The main activities in 2007 will include:

- Increasing cultivated area, including reclaiming abandoned field with pigs-on-pasture
- Building a climate-controlled seed storage/cold cellar
- Using a new greenhouse and cold frames for the first time – a true learning experience!
- Incorporating seedling and possibly vegetable production for farm market sales
- Bringing chickens into the rotation

3. **Experience:** Describe your own experience/skills as a farmer (ie. number of years, types of operations, involvement in related groups/organizations).



I have been active in organic agriculture for over 15 years, with experience as a farm apprentice in Ontario. Working at the Organic Agriculture Coordinator with Falls Brook Centre for the past 5 years has given me great opportunity to develop my own skills in certified organic production (managing 2.5 acres of market gardens, greenhouses, herbariums, shiitake mushroom garden, seed production, etc.). Since acquiring my own property 3 years ago, I've been working at developing my gardens and implementing many of the "lessons learned" through trial and error. In 2006, I was awarded the NBEN Gaia Award for promoting and facilitating organic agriculture in NB.

I have been active in seed saving and production since my apprenticeship at Everdale Environmental Learning Centre in 2001. It was the "research project" I took on at that time, and made connections with Bob Wildfong of Seeds of Diversity Canada (Bob now has expanded the garden I started at Everdale 10-fold and is doing great!). I volunteered with the SoDC Board of Directors for 3 years, and continued to develop my seed saving skills by incorporating it as a key component to farm production at Falls Brook Centre. I have organized Seedy Saturday's – an annual Spring seed exchange - in the neighbouring town of Florenceville for the past 4 years.

4. **Farming Philosophy:** Include info on why you farm organically, and why you do it in the Maritimes.

There's really no other way! Organic is the responsible steward's approach to food production, as it prioritizes the future of our soil, water, air and biology for future generation's benefit. We really are borrowing this planet from our grandchildren, and must have this mindset when producing food.

I'm very focused on supporting local food systems – including seed production. Climate change is a reality, and just one of the daily actions we can take to mitigate the effects of unpredictable weather patterns, changing pest and disease pressure, is to eat and buy local. Seeds are just one of the starts to a successful farm, and locally acclimatized, open-pollinated (so farmers can continue to breed and save their own seed), organically grown seed is key to a successful farm in the face of climate change.

The Maritimes is now home to me, after growing up in Ontario. The landscape is very nurturing – rolling hills, rushing rivers, and green forests. The people are equally as welcoming – friendly, considerate, and fun-loving. We're seeing these great resources – natural and human – leaving NB every day with clear-cutting, mono-cropping, and unfulfilling jobs forcing people out West. I want create a comfortable, rewarding and sustainable lifestyle in the face of these challenges, and further support others to continue living and appreciating what the Maritimes offers. I love the relaxed pace, but the many opportunities for change and growth.

5. **Time:** Will you be on the farm full-time for the apprenticeship season (May-mid October)?

Yes, although I do work as an organic inspector which takes me off the farm for a few days in the summer.

Section B: Work Description

6. **Job Description:** Describe the jobs that your apprentice will be expected to perform on your farm.

All the usual farming tasks: field planning and preparation, seed starting and transplanting, greenhouse maintenance, weeding, harvesting, etc. etc. Since the focus at

HSP is on seed production, activity also includes a lot of record keeping and photography, seed harvest and drying, cleaning, storing and packaging seed.

The largest piece of machinery is a walk-behind rototiller, but neighbours often lend a hand when larger equipment is needed. Most daily work is done with hand tools.

This year, HSP will be incorporating livestock (pigs and chickens), so consider this a steep learning curve for both of us! Apprentice tasks will include building animal shelter/fences and caring for the animals.

7. **Work Hours:** What is the average work day (hours) and work week? Include when an apprentice can have time off.

The typical work day/week is constantly changing. This will be my first season full-time on the farm, so I'm not exactly sure what it will look like. Generally, I like to start early in the day and work in most weather conditions. I imagine at least one day off each week (probably Sunday) but again – I'm flexible.

8. **Compensation:** Are you offering a stipend or living allowance to apprentices, and under what conditions?

I'm unable to offer a living allowance or stipend, but am willing to help compensate in other ways (i.e. support a booth at the farm market, plant an extra crop for apprentice winter storage food). There's lots to take in from the learning experience and resources offered by HSP.

Section C: Mentorship and Learning

9. **Learning opportunities:** List any learning opportunities your farm can offer. (e.g. tractor work, animal husbandry, seed saving, farm market stalls, CSA management, etc.)

- Hand tool use and care/maintenance
- Garden planning/rotation
- Plant breeding
- Seed saving
- Organic certification
- Pest and disease control
- Season extension
- Crop storage and food preservation
- Marketing via market stalls and website
- Animal husbandry
- So much more...!

10. **Experience:** What is your experience in on-farm mentorship and instruction?

I have worked with WWOOFers, interns, staff and volunteers at FBC for the past 5 years. Many of them came to the centre with little to no practical experience in organic farming or gardening, and we used the gardens as a large outdoor classroom. I've engaged many folks in hands-on learning, and learned a lot myself through the process. I also have a lot of classroom instruction and workshop-style teaching experience.

11. **Style:** How will you provide instruction and training to an apprentice? Describe your teaching and mentorship style.

I'm a big proponent of learning-by-doing, and complimenting that hands-on experience with books, websites, questions and discussions. I encourage people to ask questions and we search for answers together. I like to try out new ideas, but also show and explain the reasoning behind tried-and-true techniques.

12. Resources: Do you have any farming books, magazines, newsletters, etc. on the farm available to the apprentice?

Oodles of books, magazines and newsletters, including regular e-newsletters from different farming organizations. I have a membership with Canadian Organic Growers, giving me access to their free lending-library with 1000's of resources – so the world of organic ag is at our fingertips.

13. Mid-season Exchange: Are you open to hosting a mid-season (July/August) exchange with an apprentice from another farm?

Yes.

Section D: On-Farm Research

14. Projects: List and briefly describe 3 possible on-farm research projects you are interested in:

- a. Planting on steep slopes – I have a steep south-east facing slope that is just growing up in tall grass that I'd like to try planting with cucurbits to make better use of the space.**
- b. Growing and storing onion sets from seed.**
- c. Making hand-made gift cards with embedded seed.**

Section E: Life on the Farm

15. Living Arrangements: Describe the housing/accommodation and food arrangement you provide to apprentices. Include bathing/washing and laundry facilities.

An apprentice will live in their own cabin with full kitchen and bathing facilities. Laundry is in the main house, and a clothesline is available for drying. We'll likely share meals when it's convenient, but can also take advantage of our own living spaces when we feel like it.

16. Transportation: Do you provide transportation for apprentices to get off the farm, including monthly workshops?

I will provide transportation to the workshops. I have a few bicycles that can be used for getting about, and an apprentice is welcome to travel with me on trips to town and the market.

17. Visitors: Are visitors welcome? For how long? Are they expected to contribute to the farm during their stay?

I expect an apprentice to approach me about visitors prior to their arrival. We'll talk about the situation as it comes up.

18. Leisure activities: (List any leisure activities or opportunities available to apprentices. E.g. bike riding, nature trails nearby, town is 20 min away, annual family trip to cabin in October, etc.)

Lots of leisure activities are close by, including nature-based activity (i.e. hiking, swimming, biking) and community-based (i.e. Glassville rec centre events, Juniper pub and restaurants). There's also lots of books around for pleasure reading.

Section F: Getting Started

19. Ideal Apprentice: Describe your ideal apprentice below (the apprentice's own training goals, life experience, farming experience):

The ideal apprentice is one who has an inquisitive mind and a yearning to learn in a hands-on way. We'll work side-by-side, but also independently as the apprentice becomes more comfortable and familiar with tasks.

I'm interested in working with someone who wants to know more about seed saving, heritage seeds, and plant breeding. An apprentice with some previous experience in this area would be great.

The apprentice must realize that living at HSP can be isolated, with no neighbours for 2.5 km. Being comfortable with your own company is a must.

20. Trial period: Do you want an apprentice to visit and/or work on your farm before the final arrangements are made?

If it is possible.

21. Additional information: (Is there anything else a person considering working on your farm needs to know?)

Keep in mind that this is going to be a big learning process for me too, since this will be the first season I'm on the farm full-time. We'll come to some hurdles, but working with good communication and honesty will get us sailing over them and on to greener pastures.