

Ward Vegetables - Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Harvest/Rinse/Pack Position

For the 2019 spring, summer, fall CSA seasons, Ward Vegetables will be offering a job opportunity (harvest/rinse/pack) to a qualified individual at our farm in Big Rapids Michigan. The position will be approximately 6 to 7 months (based on the availability of the candidate), starting in April and ending in October/November. This job will require the individual to work 20 to 30 hours per week and is a paid position at the farm.

Ward Vegetables is a small sustainable, chemical free, [Certified Naturally Grown](#) vegetable farm. We specialize in greens year round and grow seasonal vegetables and herbs during our spring, summer, and fall seasons. We have approximately 2.5 acres in production with hoop houses, raised beds, a rotational system for our crops and permaculture. At the farm we utilize green manures (mostly buckwheat) and cover crops to build the soil. The soil is our focus and our inputs are all mineral based. The 2019 season will also see us utilizing compost tea, foliar spraying, and BRIX tests for our produce.

The CSA at Ward Vegetables is a 40 member CSA along with 10 to 15 folks who purchase retail, we also serve several area restaurants with greens and seasonal veggies. We are a unique CSA in the Big Rapids area in that we offer customized ordering of vegetables for our members, so each harvest is customized for that week and the customers who order. The CSA is expanding to more folks this year and we have developed a year round CSA system that makes more locally grown food available in the area most of the year. This expansion requires us to bring in a dedicated individual who understands vegetables, harvesting, the importance of soil, and hard, satisfying work.

This is a great opportunity for the right person who has past farm experience. You will be working with the farmer on building a harvest schedule, understanding the particulars of our harvest system, looking at planting schedules, giving input to the quality of the various crops, food safety issues, and daily meetings to check progress on plantings, plants, pests, and weeds along with several other tasks that will hopefully add value to your knowledge base.

Duties include:

- **Harvest** - you will be working directly with the farmer and co-managing the harvest, making sure the veggies are of excellent quality, taste, and value. You will also have input on the planting schedule which will directly affect our harvest. We harvest Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday and rinse and package each day.
- **Washroom/Coolroom Cleanliness** - we take food safety seriously and have several procedures in place for keeping and maintaining clean food surfaces. One of the main duties of this position is to make sure that those procedures are followed daily; before, during, and after harvest events.
- **Vegetable Rinse** - there will be times when you are working alone on harvest. We strive to get a crop in, rinse that crop, bulk package, and store in the coolroom within 30 to 45 minutes after it has been picked. We have procedures in place that allow this to happen consistently. There will also be times when you have help in the washroom and you will be managing how the crops come in so they can be rinsed and put away in a timely fashion.
- **Seeding and Planting** - we plant throughout the season. This position will have opportunities for the individual to be working with the farmer on managing the planting schedule in order to meet the CSA needs and anticipate the needs of our local chefs at the restaurants we do business with.

- **Occasional Tasks** - there will be opportunities to work with planting, prepping, weeding and with customers of the CSA and restaurants. This is a learning opportunity for the individual and we want to share as much as possible to help them acquire a variety of skills

The person who gets this position will be trained in farm safety, our food safety protocol, harvest tool maintenance, harvest techniques (we specialize in greens), proper tool handling/cleaning, weeding techniques, pests, irrigation techniques, general maintenance of growing areas, and seeding and planting techniques as it relates to Ward Vegetables. Prior to starting, the individual will be required to go through a safety training that is specific to Ward Vegetables and the duties identified above.

Expected Characteristics:

- **Attention to Detail** - harvesting is a “**paying attention to detail**” job! You must be able to see, feel, and taste the product, make decisions about quality, and whether something is ready for harvest or is not harvestable
- **Observation** - you are expected to be aware of your surroundings and what is happening around you
- **Communication** - you are expected to be able to talk with people in a friendly and helpful manner, you are expected to discuss farm, harvest, and growing issues (big and small) with the farmer
- **Stamina** - you are expected to be able to do physical work for up to 10 hours/day during the season, you may have to lift up to 50 pounds on occasion
- **Knowledge** - it is expected that you have previous farm experience (although not necessary). It is expected that you will share your knowledge and experiences that are different than the operations of Ward Vegetables, learning is lifelong for us!

Working Conditions:

- You get to start the day early, during the summer harvest starts at 6:30
- Beautiful views, even when weeding but especially during harvest!
- No music required (birds, bees, and the wind provide free entertainment)
- Tools provided
- No kids (sorry, it is our experience that children require lots of supervision on a farm, just ask my Mom:)
- No interruptions (it is soooooo nice to not have to answer a phone, text, facebook, snapchat, tweet, or email because you are busy enjoying your day:)
- 3 day week, 8 to 10 hour days, Monday thru Wednesday (more hours may be available)
- Many opportunities to learn and to also share knowledge
- You will be working around mostly human powered equipment but we do utilize a tractor, walking tractor, and several other fuel based pieces of equipment
- Sometimes hot working conditions, sometimes cool working conditions, always awesome working conditions
- We do taste test everything we grow, hummmm, sounds good!

Benefits and Pay:

- Weekly share of vegetables (maximum of \$30 value)
- \$10/hour possibility of \$12/hour based on experience
- One Conference (Morgan Composting Soil Conference or Northern Michigan Small Farm Conference)
- One to two farm visits during the season
- Opportunity to be part of Certified Naturally Grown farm certification team
- Opportunity to utilize part of the gardens to grow your own crop for sale (non-competing with Ward Vegetables) i.e. flowers

How do I apply?

Very easy, just send me a letter or email with answers to the following questions:

- Describe how you feel about fresh, local, and organic food
- Why do you want to work on a farm and in particular Ward Vegetables
- What makes you the right person for this job
- Tell me about your long term goal for a career

I will contact you via email and set up a time for a phone interview and hopefully proceed to an on farm interview so you can see the operation and have time to ask questions related to our farm and share more about your experiences in agriculture.

Lastly, you are expected to work for the entire season that you have signed up for, if things like vacation, family emergencies, etc.. happen the farmer must know in advance so that harvest can happen continuously. Our CSA and other accounts order each week. As a farm we do try to take a week each quarter where there is no harvest and hopefully this coincides with vacations or time off. If and when those events happen they **must** be communicated so arrangements can be made.

If for some reason you decide during the season that you would like to opt out, we will work it out. While it creates a void for the farm it is something that can happen and the farm will manage but you will be expected to communicate this to the farmer. You would also forfeit your weekly vegetable share. This position is not for everyone, it is hard but satisfying work, your boss is slightly sarcastic (in a good way), and it requires much dedication to the soil, the plants, and our customers.

Feel free to checkout our website at wardvegetables.com or like us on Facebook.

I am looking forward to filling this unique position and working with you!

John Ward, Farmer
Ward Vegetables
23380 16 Mile Rd.
Big Rapids, MI 49307
517-745-5913 - wardvegetables@gmail.com