

Ward Vegetables - Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Internship Position

For the spring, summer, fall 2018 CSA season, Ward Vegetables will be offering an internship to a qualified individual at our farm in Big Rapids Michigan. The internship will be approximately 12 to 16 weeks (based on the availability of the candidate), starting at the end of April and ending in mid to late October. The position could start earlier and/or go longer depending on the schedule of the individual who gets the internship.

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, and a rotational system for our crops. 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 2018 season will also see us utilizing compost tea, foliar spraying, and BRIX tests for our produce.

The CSA at Ward Vegetables is a 50 member CSA along with 10 to 15 folks who purchase retail, we also serve several area restaurants with greens and seasonal veggies. Over half of our members have been with us for more than two years and recommend our CSA to their friends and family. We are expanding the CSA to more folks this year and have developed a year round CSA system in order to have 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, 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 and adjusting the planting schedule for crops, developing a weeding and irrigation schedule, working on field and bed preparation, scheduling and applying amendments, foliar spray schedules, 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 and internship. This individual will also have the opportunity to acquire management skills in that they will be organizing the work schedule for several working and volunteer CSA members.

Duties include:

- **Planting Schedule** - a general planting schedule will have been worked out in February and will be fine tuned by the intern and the farmer as the season progresses. We do a lot of succession planting and try to utilize all space for the best possible results. The hoop house is a moveable structure (a Rimol Rolling Thunder) and each season indoor tomatoes are grown. Two additional hoop houses (Nifty Hoops) were built in July of 2017 and grow cool season crops in fall, winter, spring, and warm season crops in the summer. There is a permanent bed area where perennials like rhubarb and asparagus grow and there is room to plant some other value added crops there that the intern can have input on.
- **Weeding, Pests, and Irrigation Schedules** - the intern will be working with the farmer on developing a schedule for weeding (#1 priority), pest management, and irrigating the various sections. The intern will be managing/coordinating several CSA working share and volunteer members in these areas. Weeding is our biggest concern, we utilize straw mulch and weed fabric throughout the operation in weed suppression but our best defense against invasive weeds is hand weeding. We will also be experimenting with Stale Bed prep this year. This is a daily occurrence and will be coordinated with the farmer. Pests are another area that the intern will be active in. We do have a variety of pests but the most damaging are the Colorado Potato Beetle, and the Maggot Fly larva. We do not use any "cides" on the farm so our management of pests are all natural. Irrigation varies on the time of year and the weather pattern. The farm has a good organic matter content and holds water well in many areas but irrigation is a priority during part of the growing season.

- **Field and Bed Prep** - some fields and beds will already be planted by the time the internship begins. The fields and beds are continually prepped for additional crops and the intern will be very involved in this activity. In most cases a BCS walking tractor with a variety of implements is used as well as a Troy-Bilt rototiller. Prep will always consist of killing off early weeds, picking out larger rock, raking out the soil, amending, planting, and irrigating.
- **Foliar Spraying and Other Amendments** - 2018 will be a benchmark year for Ward Vegetables as we incorporate foliar spraying throughout the growing season. Investments have been made in the equipment necessary to do a variety of spraying during the various growth stages of our vegetables. All the investments are on a smaller scale but if a system is developed we will scale up to meet the demand of foliar spraying. We also utilize only organic mineral amendments based on yearly soil tests. The amendments are applied throughout the season to replace our nutrients as we do succession plantings. We also incorporate grass clippings, plant compost, wood chips, and a variety of organic materials, all from the farm, for composting that will compliment building organic matter in our soil.
- **Seeding and Planting** - we plant throughout the season. The intern will 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 the harvest and with customers of the CSA and restaurants. This is a learning opportunity for the intern and we want to share as much as possible to help the intern acquire a variety of skills

The intern will be trained in farm safety, proper tool handling/cleaning, weeding techniques, clearing areas of pests, irrigation techniques, general maintenance of growing areas, and seeding and planting techniques as it relates to Ward Vegetables. Prior to starting, the intern will be required to go through a safety training that is specific to Ward Vegetables and the duties identified above.

Expected Characteristics:

- **Observation** - you are expected to be aware of your surroundings and pay attention to detail
- **Communication** - you are expected to be able to talk with people in a friendly and helpful manner, you are expected to discuss farm 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
- **Mechanical** - you will be expected to operate some mechanical equipment (walking tractor/attachments, mower, weed wacker, etc...) you will **not** be expected to fix equipment
- **Knowledge** - it is expected that you have previous farm experience and you will be expected to share your knowledge and experience that are different than the operations of Ward Vegetables, learning is lifelong for us!

Working Conditions:

- Beautiful views, even when weeding!
- 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:)

- 5 day week, 8 to 10 hour days, Saturday's optional
- Many opportunities to learn and to also share knowledge
- You can work more hours than required, no questions asked:)
- You will be working with 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:

- Room and board provided, no rent, no utilities, three meals per day
- Monthly stipend of \$100
- One Soil Conference (Morgan Composting)
- One to two farm visits during the season
- Scholarship for continuing your education or a check at the end of the season based on the farm's profit, minimum of \$500 up to a maximum of \$1500

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 time that you have signed up for, if things like vacation, family emergencies, etc.. happen, which they may, we should be able to work something out. 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 scholarship and the stipend would be prorated to time worked. 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!

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