

Ward Vegetables - Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Internship Position

For the spring, summer, fall 2024 CSA season(s), Ward Vegetables will be offering an internship to a qualified individual at our farm in Big Rapids Michigan. The internship(s) can be short periods of time (4 to 6 weeks) or can be longer (12 to 16 weeks) based on the availability of the candidate and what they want to accomplish. The internship opportunities start at the end of April and end in mid to late October.

Ward Vegetables is a small sustainable, chemical free, [Certified Naturally Grown](#) vegetable farm. We specialize in greens year round and grow seasonal vegetables, herbs, and flowers during our spring, summer, and fall seasons. We have approximately 2 acres in production with hoop houses, veggie and greens production, 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 2023 season will also see us utilizing mineral tea, foliar spraying, and BRIX tests for our produce.

The CSA at Ward Vegetables is a 100 member CSA and 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 prepping soil, planting seeds and transplants, and growing along with 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 planting schedule, understanding the particulars of our prepping/planting/growing system, looking at harvest schedules, giving input to the quality of the various crops, food safety issues, and daily meetings to check progress on harvests, plantings, plants, pests, and weeds along with several other tasks that will hopefully add value to your knowledge base.

Duties include:

- **Prepping**- you will be working directly with the farmer and co-managing a variety of tasks related to direct seeding, transplants, soil prep, amendment prep, the preparation of planting beds (including amendments, cleaning up beds, operation of a walking tractor, and operating a variety of hand tools).
- **Planting** - the schedule for planting is extremely important and must be timely in order to keep a continuous flow of awesome greens and vegetables in a harvestable state. This means the individual in the prep/plant/grow position must be continuously observing, listening, and aware of what is happening with harvest. You will be working with the farmer but at times you will have to take verbal instructions and perform tasks on your own.
- **Growing** - while the greens and veggies are growing we are constantly observing, looking for disease, bugs, rodents, moisture and other growing issues related to the plants in the ground. If problems arise part of this job is to address the problem. By working with the farmer the individual will learn techniques consistent with our practices to help the plants remain healthy
- **Hand Tool Maintenance** - all of our hand tools must be maintained and kept in good working condition. All the tools are a major investment for the farm so it is important to keep them in tiptop shape. Some maintenance tasks include: cleaning tools, sharpening tools, repairing tools, reviewing new tools.

- **Harvesting, Washing and Packing** - you will be trained in the procedures for harvesting, washing and packaging CSA veggies. This position is a critical position in that all food safety and handling rules must be strictly followed. Training will be given and the working share will be given other working opportunities throughout the season. (the working share must follow SOP's for wash/pack/store for their veggies)
- **Occasional Tasks** - there will be opportunities to work with CSA customers 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, soil and bed preparation, a variety of planting techniques (direct seed and transplant and microgreens production), grow expectations, tool maintenance, harvest techniques (we specialize in greens), proper tool handling/cleaning, weeding techniques, pests, irrigation techniques, and general maintenance of growing areas 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** - growing is a “**paying attention to detail**” job! You must be able to see and understand the veggies, make decisions about soil and plant conditions, and whether something is growing well or struggling
- **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 we start at 7:00 a.m.
- Beautiful views, even when weeding but especially during planting!
- 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, Wednesday thru Friday (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 (minimum of \$30 value, maximum of \$50), plus other farm products like eggs, grass-fed meats, honey, etc....
- \$100 stipend/month of service
- One to two farm visits during the season
- Opportunity to be part of a 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. potatoes, winter squash, etc...

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 check out our website at wardvegetables.com or like us on Facebook or Instagram.

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

Updated: 01-12-24