Ward Vegetables CSA

Working Share Members

For the spring, summer, and fall of the 2026 CSA season(s), Ward Vegetables, a regenerative market garden/farm in Big Rapids Michigan, will have multiple working share positions available (in the growing, care, and harvesting of our veggies). A working share is a share where the member works for their vegetables instead of paying cash for them. The working share would be the equivalent of a Salad Bar share which is valued at $500. I know that this is probably not quite minimum wage (nope). The actual value of the produce each week is between $25 and $50 depending on which part of the season we are in. Another plus is that these positions can actually replace a gym membership, another great savings:), and we have added an educational component as well.

A working share member will work each week for 4 hours/week (rain or shine) plus spend 1 hour each week learning about gardening for a total of 5 hours/week. Our seasons at Ward Vegetables vary as we are a year round operation. You have the option of working at different times of the year (spring, summer, fall or all). The 5 hours have to be met in one day. The day must remain the same for the duration of the working share so work can be planned and completed. We work every day but Sunday (the farmer putz day:).

The **Growing**, **Caring**, and **Harvesting** working share consists mainly of weeding, irrigation, bed preparation, harvesting, rinsing, and packaging of our products. The Growing and Caring working share is available all days except Sunday. The Harvesting working share is available on Monday's or Tuesday's. Start time at the farm for these positions can be as early as 7:00 a.m. or later depending on the day and the weather. The individuals in these positions will be trained on safety, weeding techniques, equipment uses and cleaning, irrigation, harvest techniques, rinse/pack, and farm hygiene protocol.

The training component of the Working Share is so the member can learn various techniques, processes, systems, etc… that they can apply to their own garden or situation. Some of the training aspects include learning about soil, plant rotations, prepping a mineral tea, composting, succession planting, harvest techniques, tools, and a host of other activities that make planning, planting, caring, and harvesting in your own garden easier.

Why would someone work for their share vs. paying for their share? Well….some folks have been interested in what we do and how we do it, this is a great opportunity to see and experience that. Also many people are looking to be active, there is nothing more active than working on a farm! A member may be interested in starting their own garden or CSA, this is a great experience in seeing how to prep, feed the soil, plant, weed, water, and maintain a garden.

Duties include:

Each working day the working share will be directed to an area of the garden that requires...

- **Weeding** - the member will be trained on proper weeding techniques and tools, what plants are planted and where they are planted, what type of weed(s) are in the area, and proper composting methods for the weeds that are pulled. **Weeding is the primary duty of this position.**
- **Irrigation** - the member will be trained on setting up hoses, timing for watering of different plants and areas, drip vs. overhead, necessary cleanup procedures, and water ending procedures.
- **Rock Picking/General Pickup** - the member will be trained on what area(s) of the garden need attention due to prepping for seeding/planting or general maintenance, how to pick rock in the field and other general plot/garden maintenance procedures used by Ward Vegetables.
- **Bug Detail** - the member will be trained on what pests are present in the garden, who is good and bad. how to rid the plants of the pest, and directed to an area of the garden that requires attention, this would mostly be in the tomato, cucumber, and squash beds.

- **Seeding and Planting** - the member will be trained on how to mix and spread cover crop seeds, how to properly handle transplants and plant them, and how to properly seed various beds of vegetables.
- **Harvesting, Washing and Packing** - the member 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)
- **Training** - this is a new aspect of the working share program. Because we have so many people who are interested in gardening and what we do, we have added this component to help Working Shares learn and apply new skills. This will not necessarily be a classroom situation because there will be learning taking place in the gardens, hoops, compost bin, washroom, etc… The farmer will always have some notes or other resources for the Working Share and questions are expected. We are very excited to offer this aspect to the Working Share and are hoping it adds much value to the position.

Expected Characteristics:

- **Observation** - you must be aware of your surroundings and pay attention to detail
- **Communication** - you must be able to talk with people in a friendly and helpful manner and it is expected that you will communicate with the farmer during and after your shift about completed tasks
- **Stamina** - you must be able to do physical work for up to 4 hours/day during the season, you may have to lift up to 50 pounds on occasion
- **Mechanical** - you must be able operate hand tools and clean them at the end of your shift
- **Knowledge** - and it is hoped that you would share your knowledge and experience that are different from the operations of Ward Vegetables, learning is lifelong for us!
- **Harvest** - you will be expected to learn about harvest and how to harvest your share (note: harvest time is not part of your work schedule, it is your own time). There will be times when the farmer does some of the harvest for you:)
- **Desire to Learn** - our new training program for the Working Share requires the individual to learn new information each week and take the knowledge and apply either at the farm or in their garden.

The working share member will be trained in farm safety, proper tool handling/cleaning, proper weeding techniques, clearing areas of pests, proper watering techniques, general maintenance of growing areas, proper seeding and planting techniques, and proper food handling procedures. Prior to starting, the working share member will be required to go through a safety training that is specific to Ward Vegetables and the duties identified above.

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:)

- 1 four hour day, working days are any day of the week except Sunday and hopefully can remain consistent throughout the season, hours are between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m.
- A training hour after your shift to learn more about gardening/market gardening
- Many opportunities to learn and to also share knowledge
- You can work more hours than required, no questions asked:)
- You will be working with just human-powered tools (no gas, diesel, or other fuels)
- Sometimes hot working conditions, sometimes cool working conditions, always awesome working conditions
- We taste test everything we grow, hummmm, sounds good!

How do I apply?

Very easy, just send me a letter or email with answers to the following questions: (**this is required!**)

- Describe how you feel about fresh, local, and organic food
- Why do you want to work on the farm
- What do you want to learn by working at the farm

Lastly, you are expected to work for the entire season (value), 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 can be communicated and arrangements 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 pay the remainder of your share in cash or opt out of the remainder of the season.

This position is not for everyone, it is hard work, your boss is slightly sarcastic, and it requires dedication and a desire to learn. Please think hard about the above questions, answer them honestly and accurately.

I am looking forward to filling these unique positions and working with you!

Farmer John

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