

FINAL REPORT FOR OCIA - NOVEMBER 2022

Name of Organization: Unadilla Community Farm Education Center

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(Additional high-resolution photos are available upon request.)

Unadilla Community Farm is an off-grid fruit & vegetable farm and non-profit permaculture education center, situated on 12 acres in West Edmeston, NY. Our mission is to provide a space for the teaching and practice of sustainable skills. Our work centers on providing education and training in sustainable agriculture and natural building, and providing access to fresh produce for low-income and low-access communities.

Our off-grid center grows 200+ varieties of annual and perennial cold-hardy fruits, vegetables, mushrooms, and herbs. As a center for sustainable education and a member of USDA's Conservation Stewardship Program and New York State's Climate Resilient Farming Program, we showcase a diversity of USDA NRCS recommended conservation practices, such as rainwater collection, multi-story and alley cropping, no-till management, wildlife habitat planting, heavy mulching, on-site composting, crop rotation, and high tunnels.

2022 was the 9th season welcoming interns for our accredited beginning farmer training program, teaching skills related to no-till organic farming, regenerative agroforestry, permaculture design, natural building, food preservation, plant-based cooking, and more, to prepare interns for careers in food and farming. This season, we hosted 27 interns from across the country and around the world, including from the countries of France & Lebanon. At least 4 interns received academic credit at the undergraduate or graduate level through academic institutions, such as Bowdoin College in Maine, Kalamazoo College in Michigan, and École d'ingénieurs de Purpan in France, for completing our program.

As part of our focus on workforce development, interns assisted in all aspects of our veggie box delivery program, which provides fresh produce for low-income, low-access communities. This season, we have donated approximately \$10,000 worth of veggies to food pantries in the region. We expanded our coverage this year to include Otsego, Oneida, and Herkimer counties, partnering with the Utica Food Pantry, Cooperstown Food

Pantry, Edmeston Community Cupboard, Herkimer Salvation Army Food Pantry, and Ilion-Frankfort Food Pantry.

Thanks to grant support, this season we were also able to expand our capacity and scale up our work by hiring staff and increasing our programming to provide a more robust internship experience. This season we expanded our programming to include 24 hands-on training hours a week and 10-12 classroom hours per week.

Hands-on training took place from 8:00am-12:00pm Monday-Saturday. During these hours, interns worked alongside staff and peers in the field, in the wash and pack station, or in the farm kitchen, learning skills from seeding & transplanting all the way through to harvesting, packing, and cooking & preserving the fruits, vegetables, mushrooms, and herbs. In this way, interns participated in the whole process from seed to plate, to prepare them for a wide range of career paths related to food & agriculture.

Classroom hours were from 2:00pm-4:00pm Monday-Friday and included two classes a week with staff, one community peer-to-peer learning opportunity a week, and two classes a week with guest instructors. A new off-grid solar-powered classroom allowed us the opportunity to “Zoom in” outside trainers on subjects from food safety to herbalism to fundraising to conscious communication and more, to ensure that interns are equipped with the hard and soft skills for a range of for-profit and nonprofit career paths. New in 2022: We partnered with the National Young Farmers Coalition Food Safety Fellows to offer FSMA training for the interns, a federally-recognized food safety training that is required by law for many farms, to equip interns with the skills they need to manage a farm or start up their own. This was a win-win train-the-trainer opportunity for the Food Safety Fellows, who were undergoing training to become food safety instructors through the National Young Farmers Coalition.

Additionally, new this year, thanks to grant support, we were able to hire trainer Miles Sherts to offer 4 hours of conscious communication training per month throughout the season. These critical communication skills can be applied to any type of workplace or community living, helping interns thrive in whatever path they choose.

This season, interns also assisted with a Northeast SARE on-farm study using Korean Natural Farming (KNF) methods to produce indigenous microorganism (IMO) inoculants whose chemical and biological constituents were compared to compost and commercial microbial inoculants. A valuable takeaway from our study for organic farmers is that IMO proved to be more expensive and lacking in microbiology, compared to hot composting, which was more labor intensive, but low-cost, nutrient dense, and high in diverse bacterial microbiology. A full report on the SARE-funded study will be published in the coming months.

With ongoing support, Unadilla Community Farm can continue and expand our important work to both improve food equity in our region and to provide workforce development for young people, with a focus on teaching sustainable skills. Thank you to OCIA for your support!