

# SUSTAINABLE FOOD PRODUCTION Skillbuilder:

"Grow Cowichan Grow: Sustainable/Secure Food Production Training for New Generation Farmers"

**June 9<sup>th</sup> – October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2009**

**(this program allows for either a 3 or 6 month option)**

\*\*Throughout the summer there is also a series of learning modules on sustainable/organic production topics which are provided through a one day, few day, or even few week format. Participants may chose this shorter format and pay just for the time they can attend – and now have opportunity to utilize the **frequent grower program** (higher percentage discount with each additional course you register for)

## **Description:**

OUR "Grow Cowichan Grow 2008 Program" is a re-newed concept of Internship for OUR ECOVILLAGE. This Program is for participants who wish to learn the art of Sustainable Food Production in relation to organic practices, biodynamics, edible landscaping, bio-intensive, and Permaculture....with a foundational focus on starting your own small business/income production. This unique program offers a range of new growers the opportunity to have a base camp/learning community at OUR ECOVILLAGE but also to work with a wide variety of different farmers/producers/growers throughout the Cowichan Valley. This program is about empowering new generation farmers in the attempt to understand the rigors of farming, the challenges of perhaps having your own income producing practice, education as a basis for working with others in a cooperative and outcome focused team, and a variety of practices and techniques for working within food production. It is OUR ECOVILLAGE's hope that we can help create a further pool of inspired, committed, and skilled food producers who will widen the circle of people who are working within the field of cooperative food security models. Though always on the edge of new innovations, and testing new opportunities, it is OUR primary interest to bring together many stakeholders in a community development focused program which honors our local farmers as teachers (and supports their need for hands-on learning shared projects), markets the Cowichan as a new slow-food movement capital, and provides a forum for secure/sustainable food production education and a related demonstration site of this principals through Permaculture Design methods.

Farmers in the Cowichan Valley are incredibly skilled in Sustainable Food Production and many are willing to share their expertise and practices. This program will provide participants the opportunity to have weekly learning projects at a diversity of farms with a diversity of perspectives. One whole day per week will be spent with a presentation and then a full hands-on focus on these farms. Each farm has been chosen because they stand out in the work of sustainable production....with their product, the process they partake in the wider community of the Cowichan, their political knowledge of food security issues, and their specializations. Typically these types of farms are far too busy to open themselves to sharing discussion circles, providing tours, and teaching a variety of practices yet in this case honorariums will

be paid to create a sustainable process for all involved and to open up an incredible opportunity.

In past years the Skillbuilder Programs have been designed so that participants can pay for their teachers and facilitators (all participant site costs, project materials, etc have been created through fundraising). As the programs are educational in focus, and not an income producing business, there is no payment towards Apprentices who take this program. New this year... OUR Non-Profit is partnering with community organizations and agencies to provide a worktrade Internship program. This means participants will only pay their site costs (see below) or a minimal registration if they are living off-site. In order to participate in the worktrade Internship program you will need to contract with 1) OUR ECOVILLAGE for your Worktrade Internship, and 2) with a sponsoring organization that you regularly report to (this can either be a viable organization of your choice or if needed one which we will link you with/local to your home town). Funders for this program are providing this financial incentive in order to support the establishment of a new generation of food producers who will demonstrate commitment, accountability, purpose and a desire to see food security education and healthy food production business shared far and wide.

Participants learn predominantly through hands-on practice in the garden setting (with a variety of different teachers), but are also supported by presentations, learning goals and learning projects, personal study and discussions of related topics.

The Sustainable Food Production Skillbuilder Program offers:

- Permaculture Design Certification.
- Sustainable Food as a platform for Community Development and multi-stakeholder cooperation.
- Interface with a diverse range of Cowichan's finest food security folks.
- Support with business plan development and marketing for your own enterprise.
- Daily reflection/relationship with producing food, being in the rhythm of a garden with full hands-on production.
- Biodynamic Farming
- Orcharding
- Irrigation.
- Council Training
- Community life: all participants live on site for the duration of the program. Daily involvement in chores, community meetings, celebrations, seasonal ritual and other community events become part of the stay.

## **Program outline**

The program begins with a one week “permaculturalization”- group building and establishing learning community ethics in connection with everyone on the land. This will also include hands-on activities.

Expect to spend 6-8 hrs daily on site, or at other farm sites, with one partial afternoon open for theory. Weekends are generally personal time, except that there is always someone on the team who works the ‘watering shift’ and involves themselves with visitors/programs that may be involved in a ‘hands-on’ learning project (we all take turns at this).

This course is designed to provide a real life forum for the challenges and work involved in full food production. Functioning as a team player, accountability to your own goals/team goals, and a clear motivation towards learning is the key to the learning journey.

## Core Curriculum

The Sustainable Food Production Skillbuilder program is part of **TOPIA: the Sustainable Learning Community Institute**. We are creating a core curriculum that will be available to participants of all programs, regardless of their focus. These curriculum topics include community building, human development, compassionate communication/council circles, decision-making processes, personal leadership, local indigenous wisdom, whole systems design, natural building, stone wall crafting, Spiritual Eldering, and permaculture basics.

An important aspect of our programs are the learning experiences that come with the immersion in the “living and learning community” model at O.U.R. ECOVILLAGE. Within this environment there is a necessary focus on group process and the human/social facets of sustaining community, personal journey, leadership and community governance processes become a focus through personal learning goals and group agreements which form part of the program.

The **Learning Community** is made up of all program coordinators and full time teachers, participants of all programs taking place on site, guest instructors, and staff.

It is important to recognize that there is also an onsite residential community developing who will always be the HearthKeepers for OUR ECOVILLAGE COOPERATIVE (Inc. 2007). For the past 8 years of legal & political work OUR ECOVILLAGE has not had housing to support more than a few full time residents onsite. Many people over the last 8 years have attached themselves to OUR space and consider this their community but you will not necessarily see them on any regular basis – especially with the busyness of the summer where space is at a premium. OUR Co-op and OUR COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION (Reg. Non-Profit S41542 – Inc. 2005) are the hosts for the summer program *temporary community* and as such need to be respected for the role of keeping the overall vision, tasks and process of OUR ECOVILLAGE alive in the year round and ongoing sense of community. We welcome the Learning Community onsite in a participatory decision-making role yet obviously not as a full authority in design or decision making. OUR

ECOVILLAGE asks only that participants agree to contribute the same level of responsibility as the level of investment (worktrade contract) agrees to.

## **Ecovillage activities**

Spending 3-6 months at OUR ECOVILLAGE gives everyone opportunity to participate in a diverse offering of activities. Garden, greenhouses, forest and open spaces offer walks, quiet time, change in pace and other learning. Our connection with the Cowichan First Nations Community brings cultural awareness and integration of practices in our daily lives. This year is the celebration of The North American Indigenous Games being held right here in The Cowichan Valley! Shared meals are at the core of community life and everyone participates in meal preparation and care of the common space chores.

## **Facilities and camp**

OUR ECOVILLAGE program participants live in personal tents in our camp area. We have outdoor solar showers and washing station as well as several compost toilets. OUR outdoor kitchen serves vegetarian food with daily input from the garden. A cob oven is also available for bread baking and pizza. Meals are provided – breakfast is self serve, lunch and dinner are prepared by our cook.

Previous years Skillbuilders built the “Chillage,” our hang-out space for participants adjacent to the kitchen area with a Rumford fireplace and storage spaces for personal items.

The big yurt on the property is used for gatherings, council, celebrations and presentations....and OUR library.

The Healing Sanctuary will be available according to summer schedules.

Find out more about our site on our website: [www.ourecovillage.org](http://www.ourecovillage.org)

## **Surrounding area & extended community**

OUR ECOVILLAGE is situated near Shawnigan Lake on Vancouver Island. The immediate area invites hiking, boating, cycling, and swimming (good to consider bringing a bike for local trips). Weekend trips can reach Strathcona Park, the west coast of the island, the Gulf islands, Victoria and Vancouver.

The closest communities for shopping and services are Mill Bay, Shawnigan Lake, Cobble Hill and the town of Duncan. Public transport reaches as close as Shawnigan Lake, appr.30 Minutes walking distance from O.U.R.ECOVILLAGE.

Our climate has a dry season from June to October. Temperatures reach upper 20s Celsius but cool down at night.

## **Worktrade Internship Cost:**

**\$1500 – 3 month program onsite (\$1000 for whole 3 months if living offsite)**

**\$3000 – 6 month program onsite (\$2000 for whole 3 months if living offsite)**

### **\$100 registration fee**

- This cost is to cover all camp, meals, cook, and general site costs (upkeep and maintenance of common space used by apprentices)
- tuition, all on-site workshops, teachers , special guest presenters and field trips are covered by the worktrade Internship option.

### **This program may be for you if:**

- You want to learn sustainable food production hands-on within incredible contributors/teachers who bring their own experience.
- You want to experience community living (though we will contract with offsite participants in some cases).
- You are mature, know your learning style, have good work ethics, are physically fit (not necessarily young), are willing to be personally involved with others and practice good communication,
- You are tolerant, take responsibility, and generally enjoy life.

## **How to apply:**

Please send us:

- Your resume/ curriculum vitae
- A vision statement talking about your intent for the program and how it relates to your life path
- \$100 processing fee (non refundable)
- (canadian cheque or international money order in canadian funds payable to O.U.R. Community Association)
- You can send your application by e-mail to [ourbrandy@shaw.ca](mailto:ourbrandy@shaw.ca)

We also recommend sending a hard copy with your processing fee, because e-mails have not reached us in the past. Our mailing Address is:

O.U.R.ECOVILLAGE  
Att.: Sustainable Food Production Skillbuilder  
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Shawnigan Lake, BC  
V0R2W0  
Canada