

The Farm at Sunnyside - Employee Information

About the Farm:

The Farm at Sunnyside is located in the foothills of the Shenandoah National Park in Rappahannock County, VA. It is a certified organic farm with 15 acres of ground devoted to a diverse array of vegetables and cover crops. We also have 10 acres of fruit orchards, a flock of laying hens and an on-site compost making operation. We primarily market our produce through a local farmers market, and also supply a nearby CSA and select restaurant accounts.

Job Description for Seasonal Workers

Seasonal workers will help with most aspects of vegetable production including planting, weeding, covering, staking, mulching, harvesting and marketing produce. These can be difficult and tedious jobs done in all weather conditions.

A typical work day will start with a brief morning meeting to outline the day's goals. We meet again after lunch to revisit what has been completed and share what we want to accomplish before the end of the day. These meetings usually present brief educational opportunities to talk about why we're doing what we're doing and to answer any relevant questions. It's also a good time for employees to report any issues with equipment or observations from the fields (irrigation leaks, pest issues, etc.)

Full-time seasonal workers generally work 5 and a half days each week. We strive to have a fairly normal work schedule, usually starting between 7:30 and 8:30 and end between 5:00 and 6:00 pm throughout the season. We take an hour to an hour and a half lunch break depending on the month and the temperature. Days off are generally Saturday afternoon and Sunday. Other days may be requested off for vacation or special occasions. Seasonal workers can use as many vacation days as months of contract (if you are here for 6 months, you get 6 vacation days off.)

Our workforce and workload is smallest at the beginning of the season (March and April) and the end of the season (November and December). Shorter days and cooler temperatures limit work hours during these periods to 30 to 40 per week. We will have the most workers and most hours in the middle of the season from the end of May to early October. At the height of the season from late July and until late September, employees can anticipate working up to 50 hours per week.

First year workers receive some individual areas of responsibility which may include: high tunnel co-management, wholesale packing, wash and pack room oversight, poultry care, golf cart maintenance & market preparations. These responsibilities are based on worker skills and interest and the needs of the farm.

Ideal Candidates for Employment at T.F.A.S.:

Potential farmworkers who would enjoy working at the Farm at Sunnyside in 2021 are likely to:

- Be enthused about growing food and working outdoors in both ideal and less than stellar conditions.
- Feel comfortable living with your coworkers in shared housing.
- Routinely follow social distancing guidelines given the pandemic we're all living through.
- Be interested in sustainable agriculture and learn about this farm's particular take on it.
- Be able to follow specific instructions for a wide variety of tasks.
- Have previously worked in team settings (restaurants, trail crews, farms, sports) and enjoyed the dynamics therein.
- Be able to maintain a positive attitude, and adapt to constantly changing environments (whether due to pandemics, dramatic weather events, or other unforeseen curveballs).
- Have some agricultural experience (even just having a garden) and have decided they want to take the next step.

- Are eager to commit to an extended growing season in a rural setting, one more rich in tactile experiences than virtual, screen-based ones.

Who's who:

The farm property is owned by a non-farming family, the Laphams, who have placed the land in conservation easement and hired a conservation manager to restore and preserve native habitat outside of the agricultural areas.

Tyler Zander has worked at the Farm at Sunnyside since 2019 and will be leading the seasonal crew of workers in 2021. He started farming in the desert Southwest in 2013 and continues to find much enjoyment and meaning in growing produce and having a direct relationship with those who are seeking good food. He is always interested in finding a balance between what we as farmworkers can produce (given our own ingenuity and our synergies developed through teamwork and wise use of technology) with what we can return to the earth to rejuvenate natural systems and cycles. Some might call this regenerative agriculture, but in any case, he's very happy to be on this path.

Alfredo Yanez has worked at The Farm at Sunnyside for many years and has seen it transform into many different iterations. He is responsible for the orchard and assists with tillage, cultivation, and irrigation. He is also the resident expert on repair of farm tools and equipment.

The Farm at Sunnyside in 2021

The 2021 season will see the farm scale down its operations due to a transition in management and we will be redefining our market focus, concentrating on the local rural Rappahannock customer base instead of marketing produce to the more populous Northern Virginia and greater Washington, D.C. area. As such, much of the 15 acres of annual crop ground will be planted into cover crops to give these fields a rest and to maximize soil building and biodiversity. Approximately three acres will remain in vegetable production in 2021, with about a third of that being intensively farmed with mostly hand tools and using minimal tillage. The remainder of production acreage will involve tractor and implement usage to take advantage of the farm's machinery and land assets. In other words, 2021 will be a great opportunity to learn and develop small farm skills as well as utilize and learn from slightly larger scale production practices.

The ongoing pandemic has shaped, obviously, the 2020 season and will continue to play an outsized role in how 2021 might play out. We have taken the initiative to minimize physical proximity between farmworkers and customers, and our primary market has continued to be drive-through and contactless throughout the pandemic. Thankfully, this delivery system is compatible with many of the good things (sharing a commitment to organic food with your customers, trading cooking tips and recipes, and just generally being convivial) that come from growing food to sell directly to your own community.

Being part of a farm team is, in many cases, more than just being an employee. Regular shared meals have been a tradition on this farm and will continue to be so; being able to prepare and eat the wide range of food we grow is something that we always make time for on a regular basis.

Compensation:

We pay hourly (depending on experience) and provide housing and access to produce & eggs. Starting wage with no previous farm experience is \$8.25 per hour.

There is an endless amount farmwork on farms both large and small, but employees on this farm are paid hourly. This ensures that your time as a farmworker is valued and that we are focused on doing what is most important at that moment for the farm's overall success. This tends to foster a positive work life balance as well as focus the team's attention on being present and committed to an excellent outcome for the task at hand.

First year workers will have a private bedroom in a 5 bedroom, 2 bathroom house with shared living, dining and kitchen spaces. Pets are not allowed. There is internet, laundry and a phone line (typically only cell phones with Sprint service work here). Commuting distance from employee housing to the main farm center is a short walk with a nice view.

About the surroundings:

Rappahannock County is a beautiful, rural county with rolling hills inhabited by an interesting mix of artists, farmers, DC area commuters and small business owners who serve both locals and the many tourists who pass through when they visit the Shenandoah National Park. It is about 1.5 hours from Washington, DC and 1 hour from Charlottesville. There are no stoplights, no commercial chain stores and spotty cell coverage in the county. There are some interesting small local businesses (two breweries, an apothecary, a yoga studio + gym, a wood-fired pizza kitchen). The towns of Front Royal, Warrenton and Culpeper have more commercial shopping centers and are all about ½ hour away. We highly suggest bringing a car for getting off the farm and running errands.

Hiring process:

If you're interested in working here and want to learn more, contact Tyler at the email address listed below. After reviewing applications I will set up a time for an interview if you seem like a good potential fit for the farm. After the interview, a on farm visit is encouraged for you to get a better sense of the farm and how it operates.

Please visit our Facebook page (The Farm at Sunnyside) or Instagram (The Farm at Sunnyside) for more information and photos from the farm.

You can also check out our website. www.thefarmatsunnyside.com

If you have further questions, please contact Tyler at tyler@thefarmatsunnyside.com.