

# Farm Apprenticeship Program

At A Rocha Canada's BC Environmental Centre  
Surrey, BC

**To Apply:** Submit your application [through Young Agrarians](#)  
(open Dec 8, 2023 to January 31, 2024)

The farm at A Rocha is a living-learning centre for regenerative agriculture. **We provide paid farm apprenticeships for a full-season, comprehensive educational experience of our farm from the inside.** Apprentices work in all aspects of farm production from soil preparation to harvest, seeding to cultivation, tractors to hand hoes, and farm planning to marketing.

In the course of the season, apprentices are given information and time to learn the essential skills of running a mixed farm using organic growing practices in both tilled and no-till production while receiving structured educational time alongside daily hands-on learning. Apprentices are expected to use their labour for the daily work of the farm as a major part of their learning experience.



## POSITION SUMMARY

The **Farm Apprentice** will have a full-season experience on our farm working alongside our lead farm team. The apprentice will learn the ins and outs of running our Community Shared Agriculture (CSA) program in diversified organic vegetable and flower production, harvesting for weekly shares, managing our farmers market stand, and other sales outlets. Training and practice working in the many aspects of our CSA including greenhouse production, transplanting, high tunnel growing, soil fertility, compost making, low till systems, no-till bed preparation, organic pest management, harvest, CSA distribution, and hosting public events. Apprentices will also have access to the Young Agrarians apprenticeship staff and network.

Our farm is 2.5 acres and is located at A Rocha Canada's BC Environmental Centre. Production is transitioning to no-till and includes a 170+ member CSA (vegetables & flowers), farmer's market, farm stand, and restaurant sales. Over 20% of our CSA shares are donated to immigrants, refugees, and homebound seniors via partner organisations. Other workers on the farm may include seasonal summer workers, short-term conservation residents, and volunteers.

### 2024 Apprenticeship Season (36 weeks):

START DATE: March 11, 2024

END DATE: November 15, 2024

### Compensation:

\$18.50/hour, FTE (40 hours/week\*). Tuesday-Saturday. Paid holidays (or taken in lieu). Access to farm produce. On-site housing options. Apprentices will be entitled to paid vacation (4%) per pay period in lieu of time off.

\*Since farming is seasonal, requiring more hours in spring and summer, this position "banks" hours from the summer season and compensates with fewer hours in the spring and fall. Average of 40 hours/week over the course of the season.

## Apprenticeship Program Experience

Farm apprentices are considered employees who are labouring as a way to learn hands-on and will also receive structured education time with the Agriculture Program Coordinator and CSA Farm Coordinator. In addition to us, since we are part of the [Young Agrarians apprenticeship network](#), apprentices also get access to Young Agrarians (YA) staff, orientation with a cohort of apprentices across Canada, along with workshops and farm tours organised by YA.

In addition to hands on learning - we offer apprentices:

- + Orientation to the farm and season.
- + Discussion of personal learning goals for the apprenticeship.
- + One-on-one support including biweekly supervisor check-ins.
- + Responsibility rotations shared with the lead farm team including farmer's market sales, propagation, direct sowing, flower bouquets, wash station, and others as interested.
- + Connection to our regional farmer network (farm tours, farmer potlucks, etc.).
- + Biweekly training coordinated by the Agriculture Program Coordinator, our on-farm educator. Topical training includes soil health, botany basics, seed saving, climate-smart agriculture, and more (*see list on the following page*).



**Apprentices will learn about, get exposure to, and gain skills in:**

### **SOIL HEALTH**

- + No-till & tillage systems
- + Assessing soil health
- + Soil health best practices
- + Compost making

### **PLANT CULTIVATION**

- + Crop rotation
- + No-till & tillage systems
- + Mixing soil for transplanting
- + Preparing seedbeds
- + Seeding and transplanting
- + Setting up irrigation
- + Techniques for managing fertility
- + Weed control strategies
- + Cover cropping
- + Harvesting
- + Seed saving
- + Identifying beneficial insects vs. pests
- + Post-harvest handling
- + Crop storage
- + Cut flower production & arranging
- + Herbal tea production
- + Natural dye production

### **TOOLS & EQUIPMENT**

- + Tractor basic operation (2- & 4-wheeled)
- + Operation of hand tools
- + Maintenance of small engines

### **WORKPLACE & COMMUNITY SKILLS**

- + Critical thinking
- + Active listening
- + Time management
- + Self-care
- + Team building
- + Facilitating team meetings
- + Stress management
- + Safe body mechanics & ergonomics
- + Adapting to changing circumstances
- + Networking
- + Collaborating with community

### **FARM & BUSINESS MANAGEMENT**

- + Value-added product creation & preservation
- + Crop planning
- + Volunteer management & supervising others
- + Farmer's market sales
- + Farm stand management
- + Farm-based workshops
- + Farm marketing
- + CSA member newsletters
- + Customer service
- + Supervising others
- + Annual budget planning & basic bookkeeping
- + Recordkeeping



## **Why are we running a farm apprenticeship program?**

We have been focused on being an educational farm since the farm started in 2005. This has meant offering space for people to learn amid the relentless demands of farming. We have protected the experience of learners on the farm to have a pace and workload that allows them to be curious, expand their knowledge, and experience farming in a way that gives dignity to them as people. This includes protecting from physical and mental burnout. Some of us on the farm team have worked on farms when we started that prioritised efficiency over employee health and training. It is important to us to provide a farm that can be a place of learning and joy, and offer work to beginning farmers that is more than grinding through the season.

## Organisational Profile

### A ROCHA INTERNATIONAL

A Rocha is an [international Christian organisation](#) with a mission to live out God's calling to care for creation and equip others to do likewise. We envision a world where nature flourishes as people live equitably and sustainably.

### A ROCHA CANADA • BC ENVIRONMENTAL CENTRE

[A Rocha Canada's](#) (ARC) [BC Environmental Centre](#) ("Brooksdale") in Surrey, BC is a dynamic environmental centre with staff conducting conservation science research, running environmental education programming, and maintaining the farm. The BC Centre's 27-acre property is a living lab of forests, a threatened river system, a wetland, heritage houses, and a farm. This unique combination of sensitive wildlife habitat and agricultural land makes this centre a place where critical environmental issues are researched, addressed, and solved.

### OUR FARM AT THE BC CENTRE

With 2.5 acres of production, our farm is transitioning to no-till and runs a 170+ member CSA (vegetables & flowers), farmer's market, on-site farm stand, and restaurant sales. We are growing over 50 vegetable crops and over 200 varieties and are expanding our flower production as well.

The farm at the BC Environmental Centre has the following purposes:

- + Operate a [Community Shared Agriculture \(CSA\) program](#) with vegetable and flower subscriptions from June to October annually and sell surplus vegetables and flowers to cover the operating costs of agriculture programming at Brooksdale.
- + Connect community member customers to the source of their food, allowing households to experience seasonal, local eating.
- + Provide donations to under-resourced community members through our [Farm to Families program](#).
- + Produce food for daily meals and events at the Brooksdale Environmental Centre.
- + Offer [conservation residents](#) an exploratory way to engage in the practical work of small-scale organic farming.
- + Offer a "living classroom" of regenerative agriculture with a conservation focus for visitors, kid's groups, and the Brooksdale community.
- + Complement and support A Rocha's conservation and education work, and to be a demonstration of A Rocha Canada's commitments and core values.

Our team consists of our leads, seasonal workers, conservation residents, and volunteers. [Our lead farm team](#) includes the CSA Farm Coordinator (aka Farm Manager), the Assistant CSA Farm Coordinator (aka Assistant Farm Manager), and Agriculture Program Coordinator (aka: Farm Education Manager).

Our farm is grateful to work within the Tatalu (Little Campbell River) Watershed on the unceded traditional territories of the Coast Salish people: including Semiahmoo, Kwantlen, Stó:lō and W̱SÁNEĆ First Nations. [Here's our more detailed commitment to reconciliation](#).

## Apprentice Duties and Responsibilities

- + Report directly to the CSA Farm Coordinator.
- + Assist the lead farm team in running the CSA program, including but not limited to:
  - Crop production including seeding, planting, weeding, irrigating, harvesting, packing, and soil management (crop rotation, cover cropping, amendments). Recordkeeping for these field activities. Participate in other general farm tasks as required.
  - Assist in sales: setting up weekly CSA pick-ups, running farmer's market, coordinating donations. Interacting with CSA members and making content for newsletters.
  - Supervise and provide instruction to others including seasonal farmworkers, conservation residents, and volunteers.
  - Leading monthly volunteer days on the farm
  - Assist in the development of farm infrastructure. Organise, maintain tools and equipment.
  - Apprentices will be required to support the farm in working some irregular hours for tasks such as farmer's markets and irrigation management.
- + Participate in regular ARC community events (includes some weekend work, as required) and contribute towards the BC Centre community life.
- + Work in collaboration with staff for other onsite activities as needed.
- + Maintain awareness and adherence to A Rocha Covid-19 protocols.

## Qualifications

- + Significant interest in learning about regenerative agriculture and organic growing practices.
- + Demonstrated work ethic experience; able to comfortably make decisions, execute tasks, and train others in a diverse and dynamic working environment.
- + Demonstrated ability to work quickly, efficiently and calmly in physically challenging contexts for long hours in variable weather and bring tasks to completion on time.
  - Ability to work long hours (beyond 8 hours per day) June-Aug in a 'banked time' structure and working during ideal harvest times (e.g. starting harvest at 7 am on hot days).
  - Ability to repeatedly lift 30-50lbs.
- + Status of Canadian citizen, permanent resident, or person to whom refugee protection has been conferred under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act for the duration of the employment.
  - Has a valid Social Insurance Number at the start of employment and is legally entitled to work in Canada in accordance with relevant provincial or territorial legislation and regulations.
- + Be between 18 and 30 years of age at the start of the employment (for our grant funding).
- + Able to obtain a Criminal Record Background and Vulnerable Sector check.

## Preferred Qualifications

- + At least one year/season working in diversified vegetable production, preferably organic.
- + Customer service and sales experience, preferably within the food and/or farming sector.
- + Class 5 Drivers License. (*Public transportation to the centre is not easily available.*)
- + Experience with no-till or minimal-tillage production systems.
- + Experience with farm equipment and tools use an asset: tractor, rototiller, mower, etc.
- + Demonstrated embodiment of A Rocha Canada's vision, [commitments and core values](#).

