



GFN VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

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Welcome to Grow Food Northampton

Grow Food Northampton's mission is to create a just and resilient local food system that nourishes our community and protects and enriches the earth. Our work focuses primarily on three core components; **land access and stewardship, food access, and education.**

LAND ACCESS AND STEWARDSHIP

We own and steward the **121-acre Grow Food Northampton Community Farm** where we:

- Lease low-cost farmland to ten farms, with four farms owned and operated by farmers of color, including a collective of 19 Somali Bantu refugee families; current farms include Crimson and Clover Farm (our Anchor Farm), Sawmill Herb Farm, Song Sparrow Farm, Joe Czajkowski Lakeside Organics, 2 Cents Homegrown, Ras Farm, Flowerwork Farm, Straw Hat Farm, New Family Community Farming Co-op, and Hill-Ross Homestead.
- Run a 333-plot organic Community Garden for over 400 community members, more than 50% of whom receive subsidized plots to grow food for themselves and their families;
- Operate a Giving Garden, used as a site for organic and regenerative gardening and farming education, that grows food annually for donation to local food pantries and community meal sites;
- Manage shared community beds that are farmed by Manna Community Kitchen and Star Light Center, two local organizations that support community members experiencing food insecurity;
- Grow many fruit and nut trees and brambles for community foraging, a pollinator habitat, and a medicine garden;
- Conduct collaborative research projects with academics and others on sustainable and climate resilience-enhancing agricultural practices; and
- Provide extensive land- and food-based educational programming for children and adults.

History of the Grow Food Northampton Community Farm

Located on the fertile floodplains of the Mill River, our farmland consists of prime agricultural soils (Winooski and Pootatuck loam) and has been tilled continuously throughout Northampton's history, and for hundreds of years before that by the Nonotuck Indians that lived in the region.

In the 1840s, it was owned by the famous abolitionist community, the Northampton Association of Education and Industry, which grew diverse crops that sustained local heroes like Sojourner Truth and David Ruggles as they worked to fight slavery and gender inequality. They used the land to demonstrate that vital commodities like textiles and sugar could be produced economically without slave labor.

When an earthen dam breached on the nearby Mill River in 1874 sending 600 million gallons of water through Williamsburg, Skinnerville, and Leeds, much of the debris

carried by the flood (factories, homes, bridges, and river stone) was strewn on these farm fields, and occasionally artifacts still surface in community garden plots.

In 2009, a grassroots group of Northampton residents learned that the last two family farms within the city limits were going to be sold to developers for the building of expensive new homes. Over the next year, they organized, raised funds, and worked with the City and State to acquire the land. Grow Food Northampton incorporated as a nonprofit organization in 2011. This land is now protected in perpetuity as agricultural land.

FOOD ACCESS

In collaboration with other local organizations and farms, and under the guidance of community members with lived experience of food insecurity, we conduct programs that provide access to locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables where people live, work, and visit. Beyond obvious barriers to accessing fresh local foods, such as a lack of adequate transportation, financial constraints, and inaccessible stores and farmstands, we work to understand and address the deeper systemic and structural barriers that prevent people from eating locally grown foods. We do this by:

- Conducting the Community Food Distribution Project that supports local farms by buying their produce and delivering it to community members experiencing food insecurity, while also conducting healthy food knowledge and nutrition programming;
- Conducting vibrant, award-winning year-round farmers markets that offer over 30 local farms and other food vendors a venue to connect directly with customers;
- Running a SNAP Match program to more than double the spending power of SNAP recipients on nutritious local farm products at our farmers markets;
- Offering free Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares to SNAP recipients so they can receive weekly farm-fresh vegetables from Crimson and Clover, the “anchor farm” on the Grow Food Northampton Community Farm; and
- Ensuring that all of our food access programming is guided and steered by our Food Access Advisory Committee and Participant-Staffers, individuals with lived experience of food insecurity.

EDUCATION

- Our Grow Food Kids program provides farm & food education to Northampton and Easthampton public school students on the Grow Food Northampton Community Farm and in the classroom;
- Using a food justice lens, we conduct classroom-based food system-related educational programs for middle- and high school-aged students on a wide variety of topics, as well as guided internships and independent studies with individuals students interested in doing a deeper dive into food systems topics;
- We offer farm-based educational programming for kids and adults on organic and regenerative gardening and farming; agricultural practices to enhance climate resilience, and so many other topics.

VOLUNTEER GUIDELINES

Definition of volunteer

A “volunteer” is anyone who without compensation or expectation of compensation (beyond reimbursement) performs a task at the direction of and on behalf of Grow Food Northampton (GFN). A volunteer must be officially accepted and enrolled by GFN prior to performance of the task. Unless specifically stated, volunteers shall not be considered as “employees” of the organization. Individuals working with GFN as interns or work study students are covered by GFN personnel policies and are not considered to be volunteers. Separate policies exist for members of GFN’s Board of Directors.

Equal opportunity

- GFN does not discriminate against any volunteer or volunteer applicant because of age, race, color, creed, religion, gender expression, sexual orientation, disability, or national origin.
- Volunteers who engage in behaviors, attitudes or language that are oppressive to other members of our community will be dismissed.

Volunteer rights and responsibilities

Volunteers are a valuable resource to GFN and will be accountable to volunteer guidelines and to the mission, goals and procedures of GFN. Volunteers have the right to be

- Given meaningful assignments
- Treated as equal co-workers
- Offered effective training, orientation and supervision
- Recognized for work done

Mandated/adjudicated community service

- GFN will review applications for supervision of school or community mandated or court adjudicated community service on a case-by-case basis.
- We will make decisions based on capacity to provide adequate supervision, and demonstration by the applicant of their intention to fully meet their obligations.

Training, orientation and supervision

- Volunteers should complete training and orientation specific to their area of work.
- Volunteers may be supervised by GFN staff or other GFN volunteers.

Communication

- Volunteers must read regular email communications about volunteer service with GFN.
- Volunteers are encouraged to provide feedback about their volunteer service in a responsible and respectful manner, starting with their volunteer supervisor.

Personal safety and well-being. All volunteer opportunities have some inherent risk.

- GFN will accurately assess and describe the capabilities needed to complete each task.

- GFN volunteers are expected to work in a manner that fosters personal safety and promotes the safety and well-being of others.
- Volunteers should be clear about the skills and limitations they bring to any task, and take personal responsibility to opt out of tasks that are beyond their capabilities.
- Volunteers should not report to their shifts if they feel ill or have been injured, or if they have been exposed to illness that could spread to others.

Dress code

- GFN will accurately describe clothing requirements for each task to promote personal safety and well-being.
- Volunteers should expect to dress appropriately for the tasks involved, weather, and other relevant conditions.
- Volunteer attire should respect the mission and values of GFN in the community.

Participation by minors

- Minors aged 15 and under may participate as volunteers at GFN after review by appropriate staff.
- Minors aged 15 and under must be accompanied by a parent or guardian, teacher, youth leader or other adult with recognized authority over them.
- Minors aged 16-17 may volunteer with written, signed permission of parents or guardians who are not required to be present while they volunteer.
- Minors must present a hold-harmless waiver of liability signed by a parent or legal guardian before beginning to volunteer with GFN.

CORI and other criminal background checks

- GFN will require CORI and other relevant criminal background checks as needed.

Representation of GFN to the media or in other public settings

- Unless specifically authorized by GFN staff or board, volunteers are not authorized to represent GFN to the media or the larger community.
- Media requests to speak on behalf of GFN should be referred to appropriate GFN staff.

Banned actions and substances. Our goal is to maintain a safe, healthy, organic work environment. To that end:

- Physical or verbal violence of any kind will not be tolerated.
- Use of substances that may impair volunteer safety and the health and safety of others is not allowed. This includes drugs and alcohol, tobacco products, and vaping.
- Weapons of any kind are not allowed at GFN work sites, and use of tools or other items as weapons is not tolerated.
- Please refrain from wearing artificially scented products and clothing at GFN worksites.

- GFN is committed to creating community volunteer opportunities free from threats, harassment, and any behavior that targets other volunteers, staff or members of the community based on gender and gender expression, sexual orientation, race and ethnicity, and ability.
- Volunteers who witness actions that target aforementioned community members are expected to alert GFN staff to the problem

Agreements.

- Volunteers agree to read and follow all volunteer guidelines.
- Volunteers agree to sign required hold-harmless waivers.
- Volunteers agree to complete photography waivers either agreeing to or not agreeing to having photographs used for GFN purposes.

Records, scheduling, absenteeism

- GFN maintains records of all volunteer hours. This helps us assess ongoing need for volunteers, and enables us to report the impact of volunteers to potential funders.
- In general, volunteers are responsible for scheduling themselves for tasks via Calendly, Signup Genius or other apps used by GFN.
- Volunteers are responsible for reporting their hours to the appropriate GFN staff.
- Volunteers are responsible for alerting GFN Staff or volunteer leaders if they are going to be late or unable to attend.
- Volunteers who miss more than two volunteer obligations in a row without notifying GFN may not be invited to volunteer in the future.

Confidentiality

- Volunteers agree to maintain confidentiality pertaining to personal or privileged information about GFN staff, board, and constituents.

First aid and emergency procedures

- GFN will maintain stocked first aid kits appropriate to each work site.
- If a volunteer becomes sick and injured while volunteering, they are responsible to alert GFN staff or other volunteers of their condition and take steps to obtain appropriate first aid or medical attention.
- If a volunteer witnesses someone else become sick or injured while volunteering, they should alert supervisors and call 911 to get help.

Termination of volunteer service

- All volunteering with GFN is considered “at will” and volunteers may be dismissed from GFN service at any time.

Typical GFN Volunteer Job Descriptions - to be provided by each program leader.