

January 20, 2012

ManoRun Organic Farm Education Overview

ManoRun Organic Farm is a small organic farm located in rural Ancaster. It has been family operated for 15 years. The farmers, Chris, Denise and their four children all work on the farm and they also have 4-5 interns for the growing season. The farm produces a wide range of vegetables sold at local farmers markets and directly to families using a Community Shared Agriculture model. The farm is a total of 25 acres of both owned and rented land for vegetable production, pasture for livestock, hay fields and grain.

In addition to farming ManoRun has made a commitment to educating the community on the value of local sustainable food and how to grow food organically. Over the past few years the farm has had many school groups come to the farm and participate in half to full day farm educational experiences. In some cases school groups have come for 3-5 days for a more indepth farming experience.

The Cycle of a Farm

Organic/sustainable agriculture at its core is about building soil fertility without using significant amounts of “off farm” inputs. A farm that is building soil fertility with “on farm” inputs needs to re-cycle its nutritional inputs back to the soil. This can be described as “The Cycle of A Farm”.

4 hands-on activities at farm that follow the nutrient cycle. Groups will participate in each activity.

Environment – harnessing the sun, soil and rain. This activity describes how plants grow with the aid of photosynthesis, soil biology and the water. The activity for this session is a field to forest walk that considers how plant diversity aids in soil fertility and how farms should mimic natural growth evident in forests. Various wild plants and domestic plants will be identified and discussed.

Grains, Hay and Pasture This activity describes the role of forage plants, green manures, and grain crops in an organic farms crop rotation plan in order to build soil fertility. The activity includes a tour of the farms hay and field crops allowing participants to identify different plant types and the role they play in soil fertility. Includes digging in the soil to identify soil structure and soil organisms.

Livestock This activity will overview the role that livestock plays in our diets and in soil fertility. The activity includes time with the different livestock; chickens, horses, cows and pigs. Participants get to have up close interaction with livestock and a discussion about what benefits livestock have for our diets and soil fertility. Commonly participants can see a milking demonstration depending on time of year.

The Garden This activity overviews different vegetables, herbs and fruits grown on the farm. The activity includes a hands on work task that will vary depending on the farms work schedule but will include one of the following, planting, harvesting or weeding. There will also be an introduction to composting animal manures and how farms incorporate compost in food production.

Special Note:

Cycle of A Farm Activities may vary depending on weather and season. However each activity will have a hands on component and cover the nutrient cycle on the farm. Activities and discussion will also be adjusted in consideration of participant ages.

Full day educational trips can participate in one of the following activities

Food Production – participants get to process in a seasonal food preservation activity. This could include jam making, pickling or bread making.

Lunch or Snack – groups can harvest and make their own lunch or snack. The menu is pizza and salad using primarily food from the farm. Pizzas are made in our wood fired clay oven. There is an additional cost for lunch and snack.