**Many Hands Organic Farm Volunteer Manual**

Welcome to Many Hands Organic Farm and thank you for volunteering! Here are a few tips and guidelines that will help make our work together run as smoothly as possible.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **General layout of a CSA day at MHOF** | |
| 6:45am – 7:00am | Arrive for breakfast if you would like! Usually, a staff member will be spraying the crops with organic fertility inputs, while others are preparing for the day in the house. |
| 7:00am – 8:00am | Morning chores: Feed and move the chickens and turkeys, collect eggs, feed the pigs, water seedlings, open hoop houses, prep lunch, prepare CSA bags, and many other small tasks. |
| 8:00am | Working shareholders arrive for work if they haven’t come for breakfast. |
| 8:00am – 11:00am | Complete unfinished chores and harvest for the CSA. |
| 11:00am – 11:30am | Pack CSA bags and place in walk-in |
| 11:30am – 12:00pm | Complete a short project if we have time before lunch |
| 12:00 – 12:40 | Lunch time and inside chores –Please stay for lunch if you can! Working shareholders depart at this time if they wish. Clean up, sweep, fill the wood box, food processing. |
| 12:40 – 3:00 | Afternoon project may include mulching, weeding, planting, seed starting, harvest for a wholesale customer, food preservation, moving pigs, haying, chopping wood, and many other tasks. |

Life on a farm is ever-changing, and this is one *very rough* outline of what a day may look like. Depending on the season there are different tasks that take different amounts of time. Your time on the farm may only vaguely resemble this schedule!

*A note on the pace of farm life*: MHOF is a working farm, and sometimes we work quite fast to fit all the necessary tasks into our day. This can sometimes be overwhelming, but often we find that volunteers grow to enjoy the pace. Below we outline some tips for specific tasks at the farm – however, things are constantly changing. The best advice we can offer is to LOOK, LISTEN, and FOLLOW. When farm staff are instructing, make sure you pay attention. Try to emulate the way they are completing the task, and do not be shy about asking clarifying questions. When you have mastered something, help other volunteers to do the same. Many hands, working together is the name of the game at MHOF.

*Tips and Guidelines for Moving Birds*

Our birds live in portable houses and are moved to new grass daily. This way, the birds get new grass to eat, stay protected from predators, and are able to fertilize our entire field!

1. Farm staff will know the direction of travel for the birds, and often will be the ones moving the houses (but you are welcome to help them).
2. Before the houses are moved, waters dishes should be removed, dumped, and placed on top (preferably at the end near the cage door).
3. After each house has been moved, the first task is to fill each dish with water. Place them in the house and fill them up with the hose from outside the house.
4. As this is happening, two people can work together to fill the feeders. Do not fill them too full, as the birds often spill their food. Ask about how many full scoops to use. Check the feeders for eggs before filling them.
5. Finally, collect eggs in the compost bucket. Someone can bring these inside to wash, count, and package.

*Tips and Guidelines for CSA Harvest*

1. There are three types of CSA share – small, medium, and large. We harvest each crop by counting out the correct number of bands for larges, mediums, and smalls. Often, staff members will begin harvesting by pulling or picking the desired crop and setting it down in the correct bunch size (either large, medium, or small). Often, it is most useful for volunteers to clean (remove straw, dead leaves) and band (wrap neatly around each bunch twice or three times).
2. We place these bunches into containers based on which size CSA they will be put into. First, we pick large sizes, then medium sizes and final small sizes. We then count and inspect these bunches before moving to the next crop. Make sure you consult with farm staff about placement of each bin in the truck or walk-in fridge, so they do not get mixed up.
3. We count out rubber bands for harvest very particularly – NEVER TAKE A BAND OUT OF THE BUCKET, unless you are a part of counting those bands out or replacing a broken band.
4. Sometimes, we pick a crop based on number of that item rather than bunch size. For example, if we have to fill 10 small shares, 20 medium shares, and 10 large shares, we might pick 80 heads of lettuce. Later, we will give smalls 1 head of lettuce, mediums 2 heads, and larges 3 heads. In these instances, we count as we harvest. Often in this instance, it is best for volunteers to follow behind farm staff, cleaning up the crop and placing them in bins as they are harvested.
5. Sometimes, we pick a crop based on everything that is ready. This may include fruits such as berries, cucumbers, squash, peas, beans, tomatoes, husk cherries, apples, cabbages, broccoli, etc. It is important that we leave smaller crops to grow for the next day. In these instances, we weigh or count after the crops have been harvested to determine how many each share gets.
6. After crops have been picked, they go to the wash table. Follow the lead of the farm staff here, and make sure that everything ends up in the same kind of container that it began in. When putting away containers in the walk-in, larges go on the left, mediums on the right, and smalls in the back of the fridge.

*General Tips and Guidelines*

1. Don’t know what to do? Jump in and ask or emulate one of the farmers
2. Keep the transition times to a minimum. Always be looking ahead to the next task.
3. Want to learn to be faster and more efficient? Paying close attention and considering the next step or task as we are finishing up a task makes a huge difference in effective time management.
4. Have something you are particularly good at? Let us know and we will put you on that job (we might put you in charge of it)!
5. If you have any uncertainty or questions about anything we are doing or why, please ask and engage and debate. We are all learning together all of the time.