

# PECONIC LAND TRUST



## PECONIC LAND TRUST GUIDE FOR QUAIL HILL FARM APPRENTICES

### **OVERVIEW of QUAIL HILL FARM**

Quail Hill Farm, which has been in operation since 1990, is owned and operated by the Peconic Land Trust and is part of a 220-acre PLT preserve located 90 miles east of New York City, between the Atlantic Ocean and Gardiner's Bay. As a part of Quail Hill Farm's Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), 250 families visit the Farm twice a week to harvest their own share of fruits, vegetables and flowers. The Farm also sells produce to a local school, to restaurants, and at a farmers' market.

The Quail Hill Farm crop list contains over 500 varieties of fruits, vegetables, herbs and flowers, a mature apple orchard, young peach trees, several varieties of raspberries, several beehives and a flock of hens. The Farm uses three greenhouses, five tractors, many hand tools, and the incomparable dibbler.

The Farm is staffed by full-time Director and two Managers, along with three to five Apprentices who typically work during the warmer months.

### **About the Peconic Land Trust**

Peconic Land Trust (the Trust), is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) tax-exempt land conservation organization which has as its mission "to conserve Long Island's working farms, natural lands, and heritage, for our communities now and in the future." The Trust assists land owners and municipalities in the identification and implementation of alternatives to full-yield development, and provides land management services. Since its founding in 1983, the Trust has conserved more than 8,200 acres and employs 24 valued staff members working in its central office in the Village of Southampton, at Quail Hill Preserve in Amagansett, at Bridge Gardens in Bridgehampton, and at our North Fork Stewardship Center in Cutchogue. John v.H. Halsey is the founder and President of the organization. **Scott Chaskey, our Quail Hill Director**, is responsible for the overall management of Quail Hill Farm.

### **Scott Chaskey**

Scott Chaskey has been employed by the Peconic Land Trust since 1990, developing the Farm from just a few acres in production to its current 30 acres.

He is also an educator, having worked as a poet-in-residence at numerous schools and museums in England as well as the United States. As a lecturer, he has shared his expertise and experience on a variety of subjects, including sustainable/organic agriculture, conservation, and poetry. He learned to garden in England's Cotswolds and on the cliffs of the Penwith Peninsula, where he was a card-carrying member of Cornish Farmers. At present, he serves on the Board of Directors of the Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York; he is a founding board member of The Center for Whole Communities (Vt.), and of Sylvester Manor Educational Farm (NY). In 2005 Viking published Scott's book *This Common Ground: Seasons on an Organic Farm*.

### **The Importance of Education at Quail Hill Farm**

Educational programs with local schools are an integral component to the daily farm function at QHF. In addition, teaching members of the community about the region's agricultural heritage and organic farming techniques has been important at QHF from its very beginning. Over the years, Quail Hill Farm has become a significant community resource where the general public can take gardening classes, and where school groups, ranging in number from 5 – 50, can learn how food is produced and develop an appreciation for the scope of community supported agriculture. We helped to conceive and create gardens at the independent Ross School, and to erect a greenhouse at the nearby Springs School. We are actively involved, as the grower and consultant, for the "Roots" project administrated by the Stony Brook Medical School of Nutrition. For 4 consecutive years Scott was employed as an instructor through Southampton College; students received 3 credits for completing an Agroecology course at Quail Hill Farm.

Quail Hill Farm has been the recipient of several grants, including a Natural Resources Conservation Service grant for land improvements, and funding for deer fencing from the Paul Simons Foundation. Most recently the Joyce and Irving Goldman Family Foundation granted funds to QHF to assist with the apprenticeship program. Children from Camp Erutan, an outdoor camp for children of broken homes, have benefited from their Farm experiences with us over fifteen summers. A grant received from SARE in 1995 helped us to establish a community-supported composting program as an extension of our CSA. Funding support for these educational opportunities has also been supplied through philanthropic support from Farm members and others.

## **OUR APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM**

Our program is a hands-on working/learning experience designed to educate dedicated candidates about sustainable agriculture and organic farming. We are interested in people from all backgrounds: from inexperienced city folks looking to explore agriculture as a career option to experienced farmers looking for a new approach to agriculture. Apprentices often elect to continue their training beyond the first year. Apprentices work in all aspects of the farm's production: seeding, greenhouse production, soil mix preparation, composting, cultivating/weeding, harvesting, tractor work and assisting CSA members. During the course of the full season, Apprentices are given the information and time to learn organic farming's essential skills, CSA operation and the conservation efforts of the Trust. In return, Apprentices are expected to give their labor for the daily work of the farm. Apprentices receive a bi-weekly stipend. Housing is available near the farm and produce from the farm is provided to the Apprentices.

While we generally accept "entry-level" Apprentices and give them a comprehensive orientation to farming, on occasion an advanced Apprenticeship is offered depending on the pool of applicants and their experience. If you are looking for an extensive learning experience about organic farming, not just how to "go out and hoe," this is the place for you. The farm also encourages and assists in Apprenticeship exchanges with other farms.

### **Our Field Work Philosophy**

Respect the Earth and all living beings. Listen to the language of air, water, soil and your supervisors, as theirs is the voice of experience. Continue to question rather than voice opinions. The Apprenticeship is, at its core, a working/learning experience. The primary method for learning about organic farming at Quail Hill is by performing tasks within our farm system. The Director and Managers assign specific tasks throughout the week. All assignments are made within the context of working as a team, and a part of the overall farm operations. A successful farm season depends on mutual cooperation and willingness to help one another accomplish this overall goal.

### **Our Farm Work Ethic**

While we work hard on the farm, we also are committed to creating a farming culture that improves our individual quality of life through balance and fairness. Successfully working long hours of physical labor can only be accomplished through self-sacrifice for the common good by exhibiting cooperation, mutual aid and a sense of compassion and understanding for each other. Anyone with a serious interest in agriculture and the physical ability to work the long hours of a farming schedule will be considered.

## **Apprenticeship Work Agreement**

Each Apprentice will sign a work agreement that outlines the basic requirements of the job. Included in this agreement will be specifics such as terms of employment, regular work schedule, amount of stipend to be paid and housing arrangements. A copy of the agreement is appended to the end of this Guide.

## **Program Orientation**

During the first week of the Apprenticeship, an orientation is conducted. The orientation will be an overview of farm geography and general farm operations including safety and personnel policies, rotating chores and work expectations. Shortly thereafter, an orientation on the history and work of the Trust will be scheduled as well.

## **Regular Work Schedule**

The work week is 5 ½ days; this includes a ½ day on our Saturday harvest and market day, or watering and feeding chores on Sunday. Daily hours are generally from 7:30 am to 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday, allowing for flexibility due to weather and time of year.

## **Application Procedure**

All interested applicants are encouraged to set up a time to visit the Farm. To arrange for a visit, email Scott Chaskey at [schaskey@peconiclandtrust.org](mailto:schaskey@peconiclandtrust.org). Scott can also be reached by telephone at 631-267-8492. To apply, send a cover letter and resume to the above email address.

## **Responsibilities of Apprentices**

- **Planting and cultivation:** A majority of the Apprentice's time will be spent in the fields, tending the crops (transplanting, mulching, hoeing, harvesting, and learning the proper use of hand tools).
- **Greenhouse Management:** Responsibilities include daily monitoring of the greenhouses, tending to seeding schedules, making soil-potting mix, watering, pest detection and control, fertilizing.
- **Shopkeeper:** One Apprentice will be responsible for this job, assigned on a rotating basis.
- **Composting:** Incorporating compost into the fields, turning windrows by tractor, monitoring the health of the heap.

- **Shareholder Coordination:** assisting and/or directing shareholders, specifically on harvest days. Also, taking part in various Farm committee meetings.
- **Safety and Common Sense**

**\*Tractor Operation**

Every Apprentice will be given the opportunity to be trained in the safe use of tractors and tractor implements, to share in maintenance duties, and to acquire a working knowledge of machine cultivation, bed preparation, seeding, and spreading tasks. A tractor safety orientation will be required of each Apprentice who wishes to learn how to operate a tractor. Tractor training and operation for Apprentices is at the sole discretion of the Director.

**\*Footwear policy**

It is prohibited to operate tractors and other heavy equipment in sandals or slip on shoes like clogs. Boots or footwear that completely cover the foot are required.

**\*Put tools away**

It is easy to set tools down in the field and forget about them. Be conscious about the act of putting a tool down; all tools must be returned to the farmshop at the end of the work day. Remember, you are held accountable for the tools you are issued.

**\*Be prepared**

Have water available in the field, warm clothes, cool clothes—"think weather." You are a farmer now (almost)!

**\*Protect yourself from sun and excess wind**

The sun can be deceptively strong near the ocean. We encourage you to further your respect for the natural elements, and to protect your individual health.

**Compensation**

A stipend of \$300 per week is provided and paid every two weeks. Taxes and other required withholdings are deducted from this stipend. The stipend

will be increased for 2<sup>nd</sup> year Apprentices. Apprentices that choose Farm housing will have \$75 deducted every week for rent.

### **Workers' Compensation**

All Apprentices are provided workers' compensation insurance for work-related injuries.

### **Farm Food**

All Apprentices are allowed to take as much farm produce as they can personally eat, within reason. Food can be harvested for visiting family or family holidays with approval of the Director or Managers. Apprentices can purchase Farm Shop products at cost for their own consumption and for the consumption.

### **Housing**

The Farm provides affordable housing in the Accabonac Preserve House (Apprentice House) or the "Gnome House," 703 Springs Fireplace Road, each about 2 miles from the Quail Hill Preserve Stewardship Center. Each Apprentice who chooses housing may have to share a room. There is a shared kitchen, living room, and bathroom. Utilities are included, with the exception of telephone and cable. It will be the responsibility of the Apprentices to get phone service or cable and pay for the bills in their name. The Apprentice House must be kept clean at all times. Apprentices can decide, as a group, how they want to achieve this goal, but all Apprentices will be responsible for the care and clean appearance of the house and surrounding yard. Staff or Board members may visit the house to assess, or inspect, or to make improvements.

### **Apprentice House rules to be followed:**

- Vacuum at least once a week
- Clean stove and refrigerator once each month in addition to cleaning up after daily use.
- Vacuum bedrooms when necessary.
- Clean bathrooms once every week.
- Please leave muddy shoes on the porch.
- Kitchen must be cleaned daily.
- Recycling is required. The Farm Field Manager will familiarize you with recycling requirements. Regular garbage removal every two weeks.
- No drying of plants or food materials at the house; this can be done at the Farm.

- Alcohol consumption is allowed **in moderation** for those 21 years of age or older.
- No illegal drugs. One infraction is cause for immediate dismissal
- No smoking.

## **Other Personnel Policies and Procedures**

### **Evaluations and Problem Resolution**

Apprentices will be given feedback regarding their performances at feedback conferences, if so desired. The Quail Hill Director is always available to schedule a time for questions and/or discussion. Also, Apprentices are encouraged and will be expected to provide feedback to the Trust regarding their Apprenticeship experience.

At the Trust and Quail Hill Farm, **Feedback** is the honest and open exchange of information regarding Farm operations and the effectiveness of working relationships, both between the Farm staff and Apprentices and among the Apprentices themselves. This exchange of information must be ongoing and occur respectfully, recognizing that feedback is an effective way to deal with the conflicts which from time to time arise in all organizations. The focus of feedback is on improving farm operations, outcomes and relationships.

Any employment-related problems or difficulties should be brought to the attention of the supervisor at any time, or can be brought up at a feedback conference. **Communicate a problem as soon as you recognize it, preferably while it's only a potential problem.** If, for whatever reason, an employment problem is not addressed to the satisfaction of the Apprentice through communication with the Managers and Director, then the issue in question should be brought to the attention of the Trust's V.P. of Stewardship, Pam Greene. The V.P. of Stewardship is available to assist through policy interpretation, facilitation of the feedback process, and/or other ways to help resolve the issue on a timely basis.

### **General Demeanor**

It is expected that all Apprentices will be prompt, dressed appropriately for work, and professional in their attitude at work. All employees have an obligation to maintain a work environment that is free from discrimination, harassment, and offensive and degrading remarks.

### **Accountability**

All Apprentices are supervised by the Field Manager and accountable to the Field Manager, Farm Manager, and Director. The Director is accountable to the V.P. of Stewardship and the President of the Trust.

### **Time Off**

Requests for personal time will be considered for approval by the Director and Field Manager. If you are sick, please call in, but do not come to work. If you miss more than one week of work during the season due to illness, the Director will review the situation with you. You are not required to make up work for sick days.

### **Visitations and Pets**

Visitors are welcome at the Farm and Apprentice House for short stays. All visits need to be approved by the Director. Longer visits are subject to the wishes of other Apprentices and approval of the Director. No pets are allowed.

### **Shareholder Interactions**

As Quail Hill Farm is a public place and we depend on our shareholders (and prospective shareholders) for our livelihood, all Apprentices (all employees) must be professional, polite, and helpful to all people who come to the Farm.

### **Tools/Clothes**

The Farm provides harvest knives, daily hand tools, raingear and gloves. Apprentices must provide any other desired tools or clothes (pocket knives, rain boots, fancy rain gear, hats).

### **Safety Procedures**

We will go over safety policies during the program orientation. All Apprentices are required to follow safety policies at all times. Failure to do so can result in serious injury to yourself or others, and can jeopardize your continued employment at the Farm.

### **Farm Vehicles**

Apprentices are trained in the safe use of farm vehicles (and tractors where applicable) and are fully covered by insurance for their operation. Farm vehicles are to be used only for Farm business without any exceptions. Farm vehicles may not be used to “commute” from the Farm to the Apprentice House. Farm vehicles may not be driven by anyone who is not an employee or Apprentice at Quail Hill Farm. A valid driver's license is a requirement for all Apprentices. Vehicles designated on their

license plates as Farm vehicles are restricted to specific roads that deal only with local Farm business. In the event an employee has a vehicular accident (whether driving an automobile or a tractor) with another motorist, a police report must be filed immediately and the accident reported to the Director and the Trust office. Any other injuries or accidents should be reported to the Director and the Trust as soon as possible.

### **Drugs and Alcohol**

Illegal drugs are not permitted on Farm property at any time (this includes the Apprentice House). Alcohol is not permitted on Trust property at any time, except during Trust-sanctioned events. Alcohol consumption is permitted **in moderation** at the Apprentice House for Apprentices of legal drinking age (21 or older). There is no smoking inside the Apprentice House, in the Stewardship Center, or in any Trust building. It is unacceptable to work while under the influence of alcohol or drugs. One infraction is cause for immediate dismissal. It is important to let us know if you are taking any prescription drugs so we can evaluate whether they might impair your safe operation of any equipment you might use or alert a doctor in case of emergency.

### **Telephone and computer use at Quail Hill Preserve Stewardship Center**

As representatives of the Trust, Apprentices should answer the telephone in a courteous, thoughtful, professional manner. All personal long distance calls must be paid for by the Apprentice. Any calls from the Stewardship Center made by an Apprentice are made on a Trust business phone and should be brief.

Apprentices can use computers at the Stewardship Center with permission of the Director or Managers. All computer programs written for and used by the Trust are private property. No program or data should ever be copied for personal use or given to anyone outside of the Trust without written approval. The computers available at the Trust operate on compatible operating systems and standardized, licensed software that in most cases will meet the needs of the Trust apprentices. Because additional software can introduce viruses, raise license issues, conflict with the proper operation of systems software, and degrade system response times, no unauthorized software may be installed on any QHF computer.