



ERICKSON FIELDS 2021 APPRENTICESHIP OVERVIEW

**HOW TO APPLY: Email resume and cover letter to aldermere@mcht.org
OR apply through www.MOFGA.org, see KNX-27 for Erickson Fields**

Farm Name: Erickson Fields

Contact Person: Joelle Albury

Mailing Address: 70 Russell Ave.

Phone: 207-236-2739

Rockport, ME 04856

(best time to call) 8:00 - 4:00 M-F

Farm Address: 164 West Street

Farm County: Knox

(if different) Rockport, ME 04856

E-Mail: aldermere@mcht.org

Website: <https://www.mcht.org/preserves/erickson-fields>

SYNOPSIS:

Erickson Fields Preserve is an educational and community resource featuring a program that hires and trains teens to grow vegetables for their community and hunger-relief agencies, and a program that teaches families how to grow their own vegetables. A Sustainable Ag program in support of Maine's farmers is another initiative led by MCHT's farm staff.

TIME PERIOD:

The apprenticeship may be up to nine months from March to November. The start date and end dates are flexible.

PHYSICAL SETTING:

Erickson Fields is a 164-acre preserve with approximately 4 acres in mixed vegetable production, 8 acres in hay land, approximately 20 acres soon to be pastured and the rest forested. There are a few buildings for equipment along with vegetable storage and processing. The preserve is located on Rt. 90 in Rockport, only 1 mile from Rockport village and 1.5 miles from Aldermere Farm. The Rockport-Camden area has become a hub area for local food production with many active restaurants, markets and farmers markets making locally produced foods available. The preserve is also very near the local schools as well as many recreational trails and other preserves.

FARM OPERATION:

Erickson Fields Preserve is a dynamic educational farm and a valuable community resource. The preserve is owned and operated by Maine Coast Heritage Trust (MCHT) and features vegetable gardens for production and education, hay crop land, a 2-mile wellness trail for recreational use that connects with another land trust preserve (Beech Hill Preserve, Coastal Mountains Land Trust), and ample wildlife habitat in fields and forests. The farm programs include Teen Agricultural Crew (Teen Ag Crew), Kids Can Grow, and Community Gardens.

The 4-acre Teen Ag Crew garden grows over 20 varieties of vegetables, herbs and flowers using organic methods. The crops are grown by a group of 4-8 local teenagers who are hired, mentored and supervised the Farm and Program Manager and the farm apprentice. The program is designed to provide a real-life farm experience for the teens, complete with soil science, crop and business planning as the Teen Ag crew works to produce food for local food pantries and schools as well as a retirement community and restaurants. There are a wide variety of collaborative partners such as Maine State Prison inmates who start seedlings for the program at their site, as well as many volunteers and school programs who visit the farm to help with a variety of tasks. With the support of sister preserve Aldermere Farm, there is a wide variety of equipment available from tractors to tilling attachments. The Kids Can Grow program serves youth ages 7-12 and teaches them how to grow a 3x5 raised bed garden. The community gardens consist of 14 plots 6x20 plots that are marked off next to the Teen Ag Crew garden.

Haying on the 8-acres is performed by fellow staff from Aldermere and can include several crops of both dry and wrapped baleage hay that is used to feed the farms herd of Belted Galloway beef cattle as well as sold to other local farmers. In a partnership with local beekeepers, who are always willing to share their knowledge and passion about bees, there are several hives maintained at Erickson. Staff are continuing to develop plans for increasing the crop production and the efficiency of the operation with the goal of being able to donate still more to the local food pantries. Current planning is focused on hoop structures for season extension and improving the packing station to make it more efficient.

FARMING METHODS:

The gardens are managed using only organic methods for the vegetable operation. We also use no-till and Natural Farming techniques. All these methods are taught to the Teen Ag crew. We have not sought organic certification, primarily because our market does not require it. There are also community garden spots amidst the Teen Ag garden area and while we require them to use organic practices, we can never be absolutely sure of what they might apply.

SEASONAL WORK PLAN:

Spring

- 1) Field work: Spring cleanup, bed preparation (hand tools and mechanization), early planting, greenhouse construction, supply gathering (seeds, organic soil amendments, organic pest control, tools, etc.)
- 2) Educational programming: Crop planning; Hiring Teen Ag crew, orientation for Teen Ag crew and then supervising them after school and some weekends until school ends for the year; lesson planning and startup of the Kids Can Grow program; organizing community gardeners. Developing relationships with buyers of the vegetables and establishing contracts or at least expectations.
- 3) Tractor safety training

Summer

- 1) Field work: Planting hot season crops and succession planting of greens & root crops, irrigation set up, weeding, harvesting, pest control, deliveries, cover cropping, walk-behind and riding tractor and other tool use;
- 2) Educational programming: Supervising Teen Ag crew five days each week; supervising volunteers; provide community gardener support; monthly Kids Can Grow programs at Erickson; home visits with families for garden mentoring sessions. There will also be several field trips for Teen Ag members and staff to other farms and organizations for learning opportunities.

Fall

- 1) Field work: Harvesting, deliveries, cover cropping, garlic planting, fall cleanup, winterizing beds and buildings.
- 2) Educational programming: Supervising Teen Ag crew after school, Kids Can Grow final sessions, coordinate Community Garden clean up.

REQUIREMENTS OF EMPLOYMENT:

Some heavy physical labor is required when working the ground and picking up crates of vegetables. Ability to drive a tractor would be helpful and possessing a current driver's license with a good driving record is required.

EXPECTATIONS:

Work hours are typically Monday – Friday 7:30-4:30 (later if working with after school youth programs) and some weekend work for programs and events required. Time off as approved by the Farm Manager.

INSTRUCTION AND TRAINING PROVIDED:

The Farm Manager will be the direct supervisor and will work directly with the apprentice. The Farm Manager has a long history of working and educating on educational farms around the country. The apprenticeship starts with setting personal learning goals and objectives and a timeline for achieving these goals. We customize the program to the specific interests of the apprentice. The apprentice keeps a daily learning journal and has weekly check-ins with the farm manager. The apprentice is encouraged to take a tractor safety course and workshops through MOFGA, the local UMaine Cooperative Extension office and other opportunities that we will identify based upon the apprentice's learning goals.

MCHT STAFF:

MCHT staff at Aldermere Farm and Erickson Fields are full-time and part-time with approximately half experience dedicated farm staff and the rest program and administrative who manage our financials, communications and fund raising.

HOURS:

The apprentice position is full-time (40 hours per week).

BENEFITS:

Apprentice will be paid a stipend of \$1000 each month and benefits. Housing will be provided but the apprentice will supply their own food and do their own cooking/cleaning/grounds maintenance. Regular mowing, weed-wacking, cleaning and generally keeping the house and grounds tidy is expected. Housing may be shared with another apprentice or intern.

HOUSING:

Shared housing will be provided on MCHT's Aldermere preserve at Morrill Cottage located at 139 Russell Avenue, 1.4 miles from Erickson Fields. The apprentice will have to supply his/her own food and do his/her own cooking and cleaning. Housing may be shared with another apprentice, intern or volunteer.

No smoking in the home or on the job. No drinking on the job. No drugs at any time.

FARM VISIT:

A prospective apprentice should visit the farm if possible. Discussions regarding the final arrangements will take place during the interview and the apprentice will be offered stages to

help both the apprentice and farm staff understand what will satisfy each in terms of expectations.

CUSTOMIZING WORK PLAN AND SETTING GOALS:

Maine Coast Heritage Trust has a written Employees manual as well as a written job description for the apprentice position at Erickson Fields. At the start of the term, the apprentice and the Farm Manager will create a customized work plan to meet goals set by the apprentice. Throughout the term, the apprentice and Farm Manager will check in on a daily/weekly basis. In the mid-term and at the end of the term, the Farm Manager will meet with the apprentice to conduct a work plan review and progress evaluation.

BACKGROUND OF MAINE COAST HERITAGE TRUST AND ERICKSON FIELDS

Maine Coast Heritage Trust is a state-wide land conservation organization dedicated to protecting the character of Maine. The Erickson Fields Preserve is a farm property of theirs that is helping to supply fresh food to the community, provide youth job training, and other sustainable agricultural programs. The Farm Manager, Aaron Englander, uses organic methods and has been farming and gardening organically for over ten years.

In Oberlin, Ohio, he managed a non-profit community based educational farm with CSA, farmers market and sales to Oberlin College. He completed a M.S. in plant and soil science at UMaine Orono where he researched organic soil fertility strategies for grain production.

His farming practices emphasize building healthy soil through cover crops, composts and mineral amendments. He utilizes and appreciates different farming techniques from throughout the world such as Natural Farming, Permaculture and the Rodale Institute. He sees sustainable agriculture as a holistic system that supports and regenerates the surrounding ecology. In turn farms can serve as the bedrock of a healthy community by providing accessible, fresh and healthy food. Through education, we can learn how to grow for the next seven generations.

Goals include increasing vegetable sales and donations to schools, retirement communities and food pantries while assisting other farms with finding markets for their produce, working and training youth, and improving the infrastructure at the site.