



Grower Training Program

The Big River Farms Grower Training Program is a practical, hands-on program for people who want to make their farming goals a reality.

This Program Is for You If...

- You want to learn to grow food organically
- You are thinking about starting a farm business
- You would benefit from translation services in your native language
- You have limited financial resources
- You have reliable transportation and time to dedicate to classes and an apprenticeship
- You want to work with a diverse community of staff, mentors, and growers

Program Details

The Grower Training Program is designed to give you the skills you need to start your own vegetable farm. The program operates January through October.

Classes: Classes are generally held in the Twin Cities. There will be 5-8 in-person classes each month from January through April. Classes are 2 hours long and are held on Wednesday evenings (4:00-6:00pm) and Saturday mornings (9:30-11:30am). Translators are provided for those who need language assistance.

Topics covered in this program include:

- Basics of organic vegetable production
- Plant families
- Crop planning
- Greenhouse production
- Direct seeding and transplanting
- Farming tools and equipment for small-scale farms
- Irrigation systems
- Weed control best practices
- Pest and disease management
- Soil health and fertility
- Harvest and post-harvest handling
- Selling directly to consumers and to wholesale markets

Farm Apprenticeship: In May, you will be paired with a local grower to begin a summer of on-farm experience. The apprenticeship will give you a chance to see how a production farm operates. You will learn practical in-field farm skills. Expect to be at your host farm for at least 8 hours a week from May through October.

You and your host farmer will determine your work schedule. Expect that it will include at least one weekday (Monday through Friday). Some host farms may be able to pay for your time while others will only have volunteer opportunities.

Farm Tours: You will be expected to attend at least 4 farm tours during the season. This gives you an opportunity to learn about other growing systems.

To receive a Grower Trainer Certificate at the end of the season you must:

- Attend 90% of all classroom and farm tour sessions
- Complete at least 175 hours of hands-on learning during your apprenticeship

You can then apply for the Big River Farms Incubator Program for the following season.

How Much Does the Program Cost?

The Grower Training Certificate Program costs \$800. Scholarships may be available.

How Do I Apply?

1. **Email Big River Farms** at bigriverfarms@thefoodgroupmn.org or call the farm office at 651-529-1409.
2. **Attend an open house** on September 25th, 6:00-7:00pm (virtual option) or October 18th, 2:00-4:00pm (in person at the farm) to go over the program details, ask questions, and tour the farm.
3. **Submit your application** to Big River Farms by **November 8th**. Email, or mail it to Big River Farms, 14220-B Ostlund Trail N, Marine on St Croix, MN 55047.

Decisions on program acceptance will be shared no later than **December 8th**.

Big River Farms is a program of The Food Group. Learn more about Big River Farms and the other programs of The Food Group at www.bigriverfarms.org.