

Calypso's Farmer Training Program

updated for the 2014 season

ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS NOW!

(6 spaces available)

Open until filled – if you're interested, apply now! Spaces are limited. Students are selected based on their level of interest in the program and potential for future application of what they've learned. We also strive to select a diverse group of participants.

Dates: May 5th – September 30th, 2014

Tuition: \$3,000 for the season (\$600/month).

Tools and Supplies: A materials fee of \$250 will be required to cover your personal tools, project materials and educational supplies (including a "Reader" with a large selection of articles and book excerpts), which you can take with you when you leave. You will also have access to specialized tools and supplies (carving tools, etc) throughout the program.

Housing: Program participants are provided with very rustic sleeping accommodations and a shared kitchen. A \$100 cleaning deposit will be required and returned at the end of the season after personal and communal spaces are vacated and clean.

Food Provided: Basic food supplies AND vegetables during the production season (early June – September) are provided throughout the program.

College Credit: This is a 6 credit course through the University of Alaska, Fairbanks—Summer Sessions. Please contact us for more details if you are interested in enrolling for credit.



Calypso's Farmer Training Program

Calypso's Farmer Training Program is an intensive experiential education program focused on providing the skills, inspiration and experience necessary for participants to embark on starting their own small farm with confidence.

Participants learn how to become self-reliant farmers by being immersed in the farm operations—from caring for greenhouse transplants, prepping the field for planting, planting, seeding, harvesting, caring for farm animals, operating a CSA, running a farm stand, selling to local restaurants, working in natural alignment to prevent injury and more. Additionally, participants are introduced to a variety of topics related to becoming a self-sufficient farmer, including mechanics, construction, hand and machine sewing, and graphic design.

Calypso's unique setting also provides exposure to and experience with farm-based environmental education, organizing and running community events and a wide range of practical homesteading skills (building, cooking, baking in a wood-fired oven, working with wool, metal-smithing, woodworking, wild crafting, food preservation and more!). Additionally, participants learn, first-hand about the operation of a non-profit, educational farm.

This training program immerses you in farming and self-sufficiency, therefore the majority of the training is experiential and field and farm based, however the program also includes, topical workshops, a creative farm business planning project, discussion groups, visits to other farms and involvement in farm-based youth education.



The program is tailored to each participant's needs by allowing the opportunity to take on increasing responsibility in core areas and in areas of special interest.

Educational Methods

Farming Immersion

The majority of the farm production training is experiential and field and farm based. Participants are part of the team that is



running the farm for the season. Regular hands-on, field-based trainings will support skill and confidence building. Participants will also take on increasing responsibility in specific areas throughout the season.

“Intros”

Throughout the first half of the program, participants will be exposed to a wide range of topics, including: machine and hand sewing, wool basics, blacksmithing, wood working, graphic design, animal husbandry, environmental education and more. These “intros” will give participants the basic info needed to pursue these areas further.

Intensive workshops

Throughout the second half of the program, participants will have the opportunity to delve deeper into the subjects covered in the intros as well as pursuing areas of personal interest. Examples of intensive workshops include: “raw wool to finished product” projects, blacksmithing projects, and sewing projects.

Concentration Areas

In order to allow participants to create a more individualized experience, each chooses an area of concentration. Each participant will only spend a few hours a week focused specifically on their concentration area, however it will provide a thread of continuity through the season. Keep in mind, as a participant in the Farmer Training Program, you will be involved in all of the concentration areas—choosing a specific area will merely allow you to spend a bit of extra time exploring that subject area.

Each participant is asked to choose one of the following four concentration areas:

1) Farm Production—this is highly recommended for the person who is seriously interested in starting their own farm. Throughout the season, the person concentrating on farm production will consistently go to the farmers’ market, drop produce at restaurants and will become part of the leadership team making decisions regarding weekly field work.

2) Environmental Education— for those interested in working with youth and farm-based education, this is a great opportunity. Throughout this season, the person concentrating on environmental education will work more in-depth with Calypso’s environmental educators by participating in 1-2 field trips per week throughout the season and helping to train other participants in environmental education.

3) Building—for those interested in gaining basic building and construction skills, this is a great opportunity. Farm building projects include frame building construction, cement work, small project such as animal feeders and gates and more. The person concentrating on building will spend one afternoon per week, throughout the season, working alongside experienced builders on an array of projects.

4) Homesteading Skills - designed for the “generalist”, why may be looking for a broader overview those who choose to concentrate in homesteading skills will choose 5 areas (from a list we provide) and will rotate through one area per month as a way to hone and practice skills needed for a homesteading life. Topics include, cooking, building, wild crafting, food preservation and more.

Create your own Farm

In order to cover the broad topic of successful farm business planning, participants will work step by step to create a farm on paper. This creative exercise will cover personal goal setting, drawing a site map, farm planning and design, crop planning and rotation, creating a marketing plan, complete budgeting and more!

Farm-based Environmental Education

Over 1,500 children visit the farm each year on field trips. We strive to integrate all Farmer Training participants into this farm-based youth programming in some way during the season. Most will assist with leading fall field or

forest based activities for 2-4 hours/week, others may choose to get more involved by leading additional weekly field trips and/or creating new farm or forest-based activities.

Group Discussions and Required Reading

Participants will assist researching and leading group discussions (an average of once/month) on a range of topics, which may include: understanding the Farm Bill, food justice, GMO labeling, community food security... Some group discussions may center around watching a film together. Throughout the program, participants will be regularly asked to read excerpts from their "Reader" - a collection of writings from many different authors— to better prepare them for both what's going on in the field and in workshops.

Farm Visits

In order to expose participants to other styles and types of farming operations, we will visit 3-4 other farms in the area throughout the season. Most visits will include a farm tour and several hours of helping out with a project at the host farm. Favorite locations to visit include the local Musk Ox Farm and a beautiful biodynamic farm.



Farmer Training Program Instructors:

Susan Willsrud, Farm Director and co-founder of Calypso, has led the farm design and production since Calypso's beginning in 2000. She has an extensive science background, with a B.A. in Botany and Zoology and a M.S. in Plant Ecology. Creating a healthy farm ecosystem is her on-going goal. Susan also loves working with the wool provided by Calypso's beautiful flock of Shetland sheep! Susan leads the Farmer Training Program and often works side-by-side with participants throughout the growing season.

Tom Zimmer, Ecology Center Director and co-founder of Calypso, is responsible for the farm infrastructure (buildings, numerous projects, etc) and is responsible for the care of Calypso's chickens, sheep, goats and other assorted animals. Tom is a skilled environmental educator and is instrumental in all of Calypso's farm-based education. He is currently building a blacksmith shop and looks forward to integrating blacksmithing and wood-working into the Farmer Training Program. Tom also has a MS in Soil Science and makes sure we are taking good care of our soils! Tom will give regular workshops throughout the season.



Christie Shell, Assistant Director, has been involved with Calypso since 2001. Christie is a skilled farmer and has been involved in all aspects of the organization from educational programming to strategic planning and managing Calypso's CSA. Christie loves the fast-paced growing season and is excellent at keeping farm production on track and fun! Christie will work side-by-side with participants through the growing season.

Sonya Montenegro is Calypso's first ever, Artist in Residence. Sonya participated in the Farmer Training Program in 2012 and has continued on since then. Sonya is a skilled artist and abounds with creativity and a passion for farming life. She is currently working on an illustrated book about life on

a small farm. Sonya will lead a variety of workshops through the season, including: sewing, graphic design, wild crafting and more.



Who are Calypso's Training Program Participants?

Participants are individuals who are seriously focused on advancing their personal education in small-scale, ecological agriculture and are interested in doing so in a dynamic, creative and community-based setting. Beyond that shared interest, participants are of a range of ages and have a variety of life experience. Some are focused on getting their own farm off the ground as soon as possible, others are exploring the farming lifestyle, still others are drawn to farm-based environmental education and would like to build their farming skills while also being involved in environmental education. We welcome all applicants openly!



The dynamic nature of Calypso Farm requires that participants be very self-motivated, flexible, and able to work and live well with others. A good sense of humor is also always helpful!

What to expect

Week days begin at 8:30 with a glance at our farm chalk board of the day's activities. In general, mornings are spent in the fields and afternoons are focused on training topics and farm projects. Group lunches are enjoyed daily at 12:30. Weekends are usually schedule-free, however throughout the season, there are a number of events and activities that you will be involved in and the weekends are also a great time to work on a variety of project assignments (wool projects, wood-working, sewing, etc.).

In addition to the standard challenges of communal living, adjusting to the dynamic, seasonal pace of the farm stands alone as the most challenging factor for most participants. Alaskan summers are full of light, energy, and fun, but can also be overwhelming at times. You will arrive right at the fast-paced beginning of the growing season. When you arrive, part of your orientation will include exploring the surrounding forest to harvest birch bark and spruce root for making knife and tool sheaths for your personal tool belt. Similar projects will continue through the season. As the fields thaw and drain in the spring (early May), we make a big

push to get the beds prepped and plants moved out to the field. This is usually the most physically demanding time of the season. We do the vast majority of the field work by hand. During May and early June, we often return to the fields in the evening for planting. Our terraced, hillside farm setting provides amazing views of the Alaska Range but also requires substantial hill walking.

Once the fields are planted and first harvesting begins, the morning field work settles into more of a regular rhythm of harvest, cultivation, and field maintenance. Throughout this season, you'll have the opportunity to take on increasing responsibilities and explore all that the farm and the Farmer Training Program has to offer.

Although we strive to have several more relaxed days of the week (weekends), there is always some level of activity on the farm and there will be many weekend activities that you want to be a part of, so plan to truly immerse yourself for this 5 month period!

Living on the Farm

Housing - On-farm housing is rustic. Participants will each have either a large, bug-free tent on a raised wooden platform, an 8' x 10' , un-insulated, seasonal cabin for sleeping or a very small shared cabin. A communal kitchen space is available for meals. The farm does not have running water. Clean drinking water is available at all times and a wood-fired sauna is available for bathing. Outhouse facilities are available on-site.

Food - Calypso provides all of the basic food staples needed for a healthy diet (grains, rice, beans, nuts, dried fruit, oils, spices, etc) in addition to vegetables grown on the farm. We do not provide meat—except occasionally at shared meals and events. Monday through Friday, we eat lunch together – rotating cooking chores with those interested in cooking for the group. Rest assured – you will eat well!

Transportation – Although a vehicle is not required, the farm is located 10 miles from Fairbanks and public transportation is not available in our area. Bringing some mode of transportation, car, bike, scooter, etc. is highly recommended. There are not any vehicles available for lending on the farm. If you are interested in making the drive – we are happy to offer advice and direct you towards maps and resources.

Come prepared! - Although summers on the farm are often quite warm and sunny, you can also expect some cold and wet weather and even some snow at the beginning and end of the program. Come prepared with a very warm



sleeping bag and other comfortable bedding, layers of warm clothing, rain gear, rain boots and warm and dry outer layers. We will provide you with a detailed “What to Bring” list!

We hope you’ll be interested in immersing yourself in an Alaskan farming season as a stepping stone to launching your own farm! We’re excited to hear from you!

To Apply:

Please email or mail the information listed below to calypsosusan@gmail.com or by US Mail to: Calypso Farm and Ecology Center, PO Box 106, Ester, AK 99725. Please put the “Application – Farmer Training Program” in the subject heading or on the envelope. We will fill the spaces available on a rolling basis, so apply early!

Include the following in your application:

- 1) A current resume (does not need to be formal)
- 2) Three strong references – with current contact info for each (email and phone)
- 3) Answers to the following questions (these are important!...):

Why are you interested in participating in the Farmer Training Program at Calypso?

Describe any relevant experience that will aid you as a program participant.

If you were a vegetable, what would you be and why?

Describe the role that farming plays in your future plans.

Describe any experience that you’ve had with non-traditional forms of education.

What do you hope to gain from spending a season at Calypso?

Which concentration area are you most interested in and why? (Farm Production, Environmental Education, Building or Homesteading) If you are having a hard time choosing, list your top two!

How did you hear about the Program?

We welcome and encourage questions about the program! To learn more, please contact Susan at (907) 451-0691. We encourage phone calls and are happy to receive email questions as well. Send email inquiries to calypsosusan@gmail.com with “Farmer Training Program Questions” in the subject heading.

For more information— take a look at our Farmer Training Program blog—<http://calypsoftp.tumblr.com/> and please see the attached list of “Frequently Asked Questions”



Frequently Asked Questions about Calypso's Farmer Training Program



How is this training program different from a “typical farm internship”?

Calypso's Farmer Training Program is completely different from a farm internship (we offered an internship at Calypso farm for 11 years—so we speak from experience!). A key difference is in the type and quality of scheduled, focused training that you receive throughout the season. You will have the benefit of being fully integrated into the farm and farm-life and will spend mornings working in the fields, however the majority of your time will be focused on hand-on education to support your future in farming. Your educational experience is backed by a carefully designed curriculum complete with skills training in: ecological growing, farm business planning, metal, wool and wood-working, self sufficiency and more. The overall experience is completely different from just spending a season working on a farm because a majority of the time is carved out specifically for personal educational experience rather than just farm work.

Do you offer any scholarships or financial aid? Currently, we are not able to offer any scholarships or financial aid for the program. However, we are able to offer payment plans and we can work those out with you to meet your needs. Please note, thanks to the support of donors, our current tuition levels are lower than the actual program cost—so the program is already being offered at a reduced rate.

Will I have time to travel around Alaska during the program? Plan any travel around the state for before or after the program. We have many topics scheduled for the entire season, so there isn't time for extended trips. However, there are many beautiful places nearby and we encourage weekend excursions!

Should I be worried about bears or other wildlife? We rarely see bears on the farm. We are not located in an area with high bear density. However, we do encounter other large wildlife on the farm (mostly moose) and will make sure that you are oriented on what to do when you encounter any wildlife while you are here.

What about the mosquitoes? The farm is located up on a hillside and is “high and dry” which usually means that we are relatively mosquito free. However, we do have periods of time (evenings in June...) or some years (2013) with high mosquito density. We have head nets and natural mosquito repellent available for use. Also—the shared kitchen is mosquito-free and sleeping areas are equipped with mosquito nets. Even on a bad mosquito year, by mid summer they should be gone!

How will I know what to bring? Upon acceptance in the program, we will provide you with a detailed list on what to bring, including suggestions on where to find items.



What type of people participate in the program? All types of people (different ages, life experience and future plans), participate in the program — that's just one of the elements that makes it so much fun! People choose to do the program for all kinds of reasons and have just as many different ways that they plan on applying what they've learned. Check out the profiles of our 2013 Farmer Training Program participants on our website—

www.calypsofarm.org or our new Farmer Training Program blog: <http://calypsoftp.tumblr.com/post/62108086518/meet-the-2013-farmer-training-program-participants>

What if I'm not sure which concentration area to choose? That's OK! Let us know your top two areas of interest and then during the season if you'd like to switch your concentration area you certainly can!

How can I get a better idea of what it's like to participate in this program? Sonya Montenegro has recently started a blog about Calypso's Farmer Training Program! Take a look at the blog to get a better idea of the types of things that go on. calypsoftp.tumblr.com/

Another option is to talk directly to someone who has participated in the program. Many of the past program participants have offered to talk with prospective participants. We want you to have as much info as possible so that you can decide whether this program is right for you. Please let us know if you'd like to talk to a past participant and we can get you contact information!

THANK YOU for considering participating in Calypso's Farmer Training Program! We hope you'll want to spend a dynamic farming season with us. Please contact us with any other questions. We'd love to hear from you!

