



Dylan Chaggier | CHP

Apprentices work on UCSC's 25-acre farm site gaining hands-on work experience in greenhouses, gardens, orchards, and fields.



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## Garden of Honor

UCSC's Apprenticeship in Ecological Horticulture is gaining national recognition as a model for sustainable farming

by Laura Fishman

**F**rom the base of the UC Santa Cruz campus, walk past the main entrance onto Glenn Coolidge Drive. After traveling a quarter of a mile, turn left onto the bike path. Journey another five minutes along the same path through the campus fields, until eventually coming across a large wooden gate, known as the visitor's entrance next to the Louise Cain Gatehouse.

Welcome to the UCSC Farm.

All that's left is to open the gate and start to wander.

While thousands of people visit the UCSC Farm each year, as well as the Alan Chadwick Garden behind Merrill College, this farm and garden is home to 40 adults who are learning practical and academic techniques of organic farming and gardening.

This six-month program, called the Apprenticeship in Ecological Horticulture, is offered through UCSC's Center of Agroecology and

Sustainable Food Systems (CASFS), where the apprentices work full-time on the farm and also attend academic workshops on agroecology and horticulture.

While walking through the 25-acre farm site, Senior Editor of CASFS Martha Brown explained that the aim of the apprenticeship program is to increase both ecological and social sustainability in the food systems by mixing theoretical and practical instruction.

"(The program) is very practically oriented, very hands-on, mostly through skill building," Brown said. "We focus on not just growing food but also on distribution, availability, and aspects of sustainability."

Apprentices in the program run the farm by completing necessary tasks including sowing seeds, preparing the soil for cultivation, managing greenhouse crops and even selling the plants at the base of campus each

Friday.

As Brown walks to the back of the farm to the rows of flowerbeds, she points to a line of tents at the edge of the farm site where some of the farm's apprentices reside.

Brian Coltrin, who has been an apprentice in the program since April, lives in a tent on the farm as a means of affordable housing and to gain a greater understanding of farm life.

"[Living in a tent] is a critical part of the program - perhaps the most important aspect of the program," Coltrin said while taking a break from his work next to the vegetable shed.

The community feature of the Apprenticeship in Ecological Horticulture is unique in that it separates the program from other day-base trainings in plant cultivation.

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## Keep in Touch With the Farm

### CSA Program

The Center of Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems at UCSC offers a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program, where community members can establish a relationship with the farm by becoming shareholders. As a shareholder, you support the farm directly through payments, and in exchange receive a share of the farm's organic produce each week. If you are a student with a meal plan, you can exchange meals or flexi dollars for a weekly box or organic fruits and vegetable. For more information about the Center's Farm & Garden CSA call Liz Milazzo or Crystal Jensen at (831) 459-4661 or e-mail [farmcsa@ucsc.edu](mailto:farmcsa@ucsc.edu).

### The Market Cart

Apprentices with the UCSC Farm sell organic produce and fresh flowers at the base of campus with the Center's Farm & Garden Market Cart. The Market Cart operates every Tuesday and Friday from 12 noon to 6 p.m., from early June through October.

### Fall Harvest Festival

Saturday October 4, 11 a.m.-5p.m.

Celebrate the autumn season with the annual Fall Harvest Festival at the UCSC Farm this October. Activities include apple tasting, live music, an apple pie bake-off, and a "Food for Thought" forum. Call 831.459-3240 for more information or if you are interested in volunteering for the event.

## Campus Farm

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Food Systems Working Group Coordinator Tim Galarneau knows the importance of community among the apprentices on the farm.

"When they live and work and break bread together it does something very unique and very special," Galarneau said. "It's this long-term residential training program, where you see changes in the individuals because of their commitment to community in the process."

According to Jan Perez, a researcher of CASFS, UCSC was the first university to start a campus farm. Alan Chadwick started the garden in 1967 with apprentices working by his side, using organic practices including composting, the use of organic fertilizers and biological pest control.

In 1972, Chadwick started the UCSC Farm on what was originally Cowell Ranch, as an outgrowth of the student-run garden where people continued using organic techniques.

After more than 40 years of operation, the apprenticeship program has become recognized around the world and inspired other colleges around the country to develop campus-based farm education programs.

Michigan State University, Prescott College and the University of Montana are just a few colleges with higher education farming programs modeled after the Apprenticeship in Ecological Horticulture at UCSC.

Josh Slotnick, who completed the apprenticeship at UCSC in 1991, started a similar program at the University of Montana in 1997, where he is the founder and director of the Program in Ecological Agriculture and Society on a 10-acre farm site.

"I thought that what I experienced at UCSC was the best thing ever," Slotnick said. "And since I couldn't continue being an apprentice there, I decided to start another one."

While campus farms have adopted certain elements of UCSC's farm and gardening programs, Garden Manager of CASFS Christof Bernau believes other programs have developed independently and that, as far as the apprenticeship goes, "there is nothing else like it."

"Ours is one of the more diverse student farms in terms of the range of crops that are being grown here," Bernau said while caring for a tomato patch on a hot summer day. "As well as the range of audiences that are being served by the site."

According to Bernau, the farm and garden sites remain distinctive because CASFS continues to reach out to a broad age range. In the past, apprentices in a particular session ranged from ages 18 to 70. In addition to adult education, CASFS does work with youth from such programs as Life Lab, where children learn about natural systems and sustainability through hands-on learning techniques in an outdoor garden classroom.

"The breadth of the different audiences that are served here in various ways is one of the most unique aspects of [the farm and garden]," Bernau said while trimming diseased

foliage away from the tomato plants.

Various people from different backgrounds come from all over the world to complete the Apprenticeship in Ecological Horticulture.

Miranda Roberts, known as "Farmer Miranda" amongst the children who visit the facility, came to Santa Cruz all the way from Maryland to be an apprentice in the program. After receiving her Masters degree in English at the University of North Carolina - Greensboro, she decided to take a turn in her life and pursue a career related to growing food.

"I really just like working in the garden," Roberts said. "All the hands-on aspects of it from planting seeds to watching them grow, to eating - it's satisfying."

Galarneau explained that the education programs of CASFS are models of a concept called Participatory Action Research (PAR), where students learn knowledge from the community in which they work.

"The best way for students to access and engage is to bring students into that base of learning," Galarneau said. "Students of all different ages come to the farm and have a hands-on, class-based learning system that gives them the fundamentals of setting up agroecological-focused food systems."

Galarneau predicts that PAR will become an important aspect of higher education in the future. CASFS has put out a publication available for purchase titled Teaching Organic Farming and Gardening, a manual that describes the teaching methods of PAR and how to apply them to the teachings of gardening and horticulture skills.

In addition, the manual discusses the "how to" characteristics of organic farming practices in order to teach others how they can start their own organic garden. The practical skills discussed in the manual include compost production, transplanting, and soil fertility management. The CASFS staff is currently working on translating the manual into Spanish.

While apprentice Roberts updates the blackboard on harvest inventory in the vegetable shed, she reflects on the importance of learning through PAR methods.

"There's plenty of places where you can go to get a Horticulture degree, but here you get all the skills," she said.

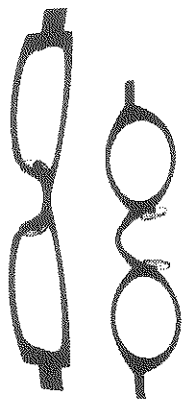
And with six months of training, Bernau hopes that the apprentices will take their skills and put them to good use.

"Food and food security are pivotal to our survival and pivotal toward social justice," Bernau said. "I hope people who graduate from this program are going to be individually and collectively playing a significant role in creating more access to it."

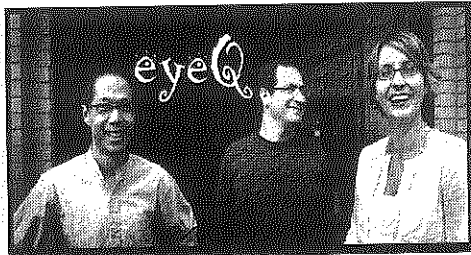
The Alan Chadwick Garden and UCSC Farm are open everyday for visitors from 8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. If you are interested in participating in the Apprenticeship in Ecological Horticulture or doing an internship with the Farm and Garden visit <http://casfs.ucsc.edu/training>.

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