

Student Farm Management I: Planning For Production

STOCKSCH 397SF – 2 Credits

Mondays and Wednesdays 10:00AM-12:05PM

103 CNS Research and Education Greenhouse

This course should be taken concurrently with STOCKSCH 398E lab section

Wednesdays 1:25 -4:30 103 CNS Research and Education Greenhouse

Instructors:

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Office hours Tuesdays and Thursdays 10-12 or by appointment

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Office hours available by appointment

Course Description

In this class students will learn how to create crop plans, establish markets, select cultivars, order seeds and supplies, and plan planting schedules in support of summer production at the UMass Student Farm.

Course Goals

Students gain knowledge and practical skills related to planning for and managing a diversified organic vegetable farm. Specifically, students will adopt the following practices:

- Identify wholesale, retail and CSA market purchasing trends to determine current market needs
- Create specific crop plans based on organic production practices and individual market needs
- Demonstrate safe operation of farm and greenhouse equipment used for vegetable production
- Apply learned marketing skills at local farmers markets and educational workshops and events on campus and in the community
- Utilize knowledge gained in the classroom by preparing fields for summer production (includes tractor work, equipment calibration, and soil test interpretation)

Required Textbooks

The Organic Farmer's Business Handbook, A Complete Guide to Managing Finances, Crops and Staff – and Making Profit. By Richard Wiswall – Chelsea Green Publishing 2009. Cost \$34.95

Sharing the Harvest: A Citizen's Guide to Community Supported Agriculture, 2nd Edition. By Elizabeth Henderson - Chelsea Green Publishing, 2007 Cost is \$25

The New England Vegetable Management Guide 2014-2015 edition. Available through UMass Extension Bookstore or through Instructor. Cost is \$25

Wholesale Success - A Farmer's Guide to Food Safety, Postharvest Handling, Packing and Selling Produce. Available online at www.familyfarmed.org. Cost is \$70

Outline of Topics Covered

Markets – wholesale, retail and CSA. Identification of customers, differences, similarities.

Farm Planning – Using Excel to calculate production including market needs, land requirements and seed order.

Organic Certification – Discussion of National Organic Practices and requirements for maintaining organic certification.

Seedling Production – Organic greenhouse management including seeding methods and transplant production.

Soil Health, Fertility and Cover Crops – Soil test interpretation, determining best cover crops for production plan.

Integrated Pest Management on Organic Farms – Development and implementation of a pest management plan.

Food Safety – Development and implementation of a Food Safety Plan –GAP Certification and Standard Operating Procedures used on the farm

Small Farm Equipment –Overview of equipment used by the Student Farm. Equipment safety training, use and maintenance.

Course Requirements

Creation of Crop Plans. *Creating plans for crops that will be produced during the field season is the core curriculum for the spring semester. Crops chosen will be based on the needs of specific markets and will be planned for using certified organic practices. Each student will create a complete production plan for 2-3 crops.*

Participation in weekly classes. *Participation is essential (ie, required!). Class will include lectures, farm visits, discussion, hands-on training, meetings with invited guests, and group decisions and problem solving. Our schedule is driven by what we need to know in order to make decisions and grow crops in a timely manner to achieve our growing and marketing goals. We have a timetable for decisions about markets, crops, seeds, soil amendments. Your presence is important and if you are not there you will be missed! If you need to miss class for illness or another problem, let the instructors know via email in advance.*

Participation in field and greenhouse work. *This will include transplant production, field preparation, and planting. There will be field and greenhouse work that needs to be done outside of class time.*

Service Learning. *Working on local area farms will be required. Each student is required to spend at least 4-6 hours volunteering on a local vegetable farm. Students will work with the farm crew doing whatever is needed at that time of the season, and are encouraged to explore conventional operations. A short reflective paper is due after the farm visit.*

Special Topic Research Paper and Presentation. *Each student will be required to write an 8-10 page research paper on a topic of their choice related to sustainable agriculture. Topics should be relevant to production practices used by the UMass Student Farm. Students will be expected to present their results to the campus community during a Special Topics Fair to be held during class time during the spring semester.*

Fundraising and Public Relations. *Involvement in activities relevant to the ongoing success of the program will be required. Examples of events include UMass Earth Day Celebration, tabling in the campus*

center and meeting with current market managers and potential customers for the upcoming season. A short paper describing any public relation experiences will be required at the end of the semester.

Grading

Grades will be based on a student's quality and completion of written work in a timely manner and ability to complete the course requirements listed above. A grading rubric will be handed out at the first class with a detailed point system for each assignment and course requirement.

Course Policies

Student Contract – *All students will be required to sign a contract that outlines student commitment to adhere to the course requirements. Students who are in violation of the contract will not be able to continue the program through the summer and fall semester.*

Late Assignments – *All assignments received after due date will be penalized 5 points each day past the due date. Assignments will not be received a week after due date without instructor permission.*

Attendance Policy – *Attendance is mandatory for both STOCKSCH 397SF and STOCKSCH 398E. After 2 unexcused absences attendance grade will drop by 5 points for each absence.*

Academic Honesty Statement

The integrity of the academic enterprise of any institution of higher education requires honesty in scholarship and research. Academic honesty is therefore required of all students at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Academic dishonesty (cheating, fabrication, facilitating dishonesty) is prohibited in all programs of the University. Plagiarism is the representation of another person's word and ideas as our own. This misrepresentation is a breach of ethics that seriously compromise a person's reputation. Professional careers have been ruined by revelations of plagiarism. Students, therefore, must scrupulously acknowledge sources to give proper credit for borrowed materials. The following rules should be observed to make sure that the distinction between your own words and ideas and those of others is justly maintained. Submitting a paper that is completely the work of another person is plagiarism in its most extreme form. Any student found plagiarizing all or part of an assignment should expect severe penalties, ranging from failure in that assignment to being recommended for a hearing before a judiciary body of the University. Any incident of plagiarism or other form of academic dishonesty in this class will result in recommendation for dismissal from the University of Massachusetts.

Disability Statement

The University of Massachusetts Amherst is committed to providing an equal educational opportunity for all students. If you have a documented physical, psychological, or learning disability on file with Disability Services (DS), Learning Disabilities Support Services (LDSS), or Psychological Disabilities Services (PDS), you may be eligible for reasonable academic accommodations to help you succeed in this courses. If you have a documented disability that requires an accommodation in the course, you should notify the instructor within the first two weeks of the course so that appropriate arrangements can be made.