



# The Natick Community Organic Farm

## Community Programs Handbook 2022-2023

This handbook, newly revised for 2022-2023, is designed to provide in-depth information about our Community Programs (Community Programs = anything that is not a summer program). Please review this document before your child's first day with us.

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# Getting ready

**Acclimating to the farm:** NCOF is a community farm, open to the public for free from dawn to dusk, 365 days a year. We encourage all families to visit, especially those with children who are young and/or new to our programs. Family visits prior to scheduled programs can ease program day jitters. As our programs run year-round serving thousands of children, we are generally not able to arrange for 1:1 “meet and greets” with your child’s teacher.

**Water and Snacks:** Please send your child with a water bottle and a snack(s) to ALL programs. (Kids in programs 4+ hours in length should be sent with a meal and snacks.) Due to the prevalence of nut allergies, we request nut-free food. We may sample farm produce during our programs, so please alert us to your child’s allergies.

**Dressing for the weather:** Kindly review our detailed guide to gear at the end of this handbook, and contact us with any questions after reading. Sprouts, Woodland Adventures and Fridays on the Farm families: please send a full change of clothes in your child’s backpack.

**Sunscreen & Bug Spray:** Parents supply and apply both as needed. Bug spray must be applied off-farm.

# Program Policies

## Refunds

NCOF is a working farm, and our programs run year-round, rain or shine. Since we hire educators well in advance based on class enrollment, we only issue refunds for cancellation requests received 14 or more calendar days before a session’s first meeting. Cancellation requests must be sent in writing to [communityprograms@natickfarm.org](mailto:communityprograms@natickfarm.org). A \$35 processing fee applies.

NCOF reserves the right to cancel or postpone classes due to low enrollment. If we must cancel a class due to low enrollment, we will notify you as soon as possible and offer you options for a free transfer or full refund.

Pro-rated refunds will be applied if registering for a program after the program start date. We do not offer refunds if a child is asked to leave a program due to behavior issues.

## Transfers

We will do our best to accommodate requests for changes in enrollment, depending on a variety of factors including staff and facility availability. We are generally most able to accommodate transfers *before* a session begins.

If you'd like to request a transfer, please email [communityprograms@natickfarm.org](mailto:communityprograms@natickfarm.org) indicating 1) your current program and 2) your desired program.

Transfers will be confirmed in writing by a member of the NCOF Education team. A \$35 fee applies.

## Weather Delays and Cancellations



NCOF programs follow the weather closures of the Natick Public Schools. **If the Natick Public Schools (NPS) are closed due to snow or other weather conditions, NCOF's programs are canceled that day as well.** While we do not issue refunds for NPS closure days, we will make every effort to offer a make-up class. If NPS have a delayed opening, morning programs are canceled, while afternoon programs will run.

## Scholarships

Scholarships are available for our programs. Please contact Catherine, Assistant Director [communityprograms@natickfarm.org](mailto:communityprograms@natickfarm.org) We are currently (July 2022) working on a new scholarship policy and will add it to this document once available.

## Aides

Please contact us if your child needs to attend with an aide or other support person. Parents are not allowed to participate in programs. All of our programs are drop-off programs, except those designated as 'with a Caregiver' program.

## Communication

Farm to Families. We will use:

- Email- primary mode of contact. **Please ensure [communityprograms@natickfarm.org](mailto:communityprograms@natickfarm.org) is added to your safe sender/contact list.**
- Telephone- last minute program changes, issues, child illness etc. In this era of working from home, leaving our phones on vibrate, spam call blocking apps, **please ensure we can reach you when your child is on the farm.** While the most common call home is for a forgotten water bottle or snack, it's imperative that we can reach you when needed.

Families to Farm. We ask you to use:

- Email- primary mode of contact.
- Telephone- anything related to COVID or health, last minute changes, issues.

### Toileting

Children must be potty-trained to participate in our drop-off programs. Educators can assist with toileting but are not required to assist in changing clothes if a child has an accident. We'll do our best to talk a child through changing their own clothes after an accident, but if they struggle with that and/or have an accident with a bowel movement, we will call for an early pick-up. We do not change diapers.

We offer frequent bathroom breaks and reminders to young children.

### Late Pick Up

A late fee of \$1 per minute will be charged after a 5 minute grace period.

### First Aid & Poison Ivy

- Scrapes & cuts: We will wash with soap and water and apply a Band-Aid. We do not apply any topical medications (incl. antibiotic, anti-itch), sunscreen, or bug spray.
- If we think your child has been exposed to poison ivy, we will help them wash the affected area with Tecnu, a mineral-oil based product that removes the irritating oils. We also instruct all children 5+ in identifying the plant.

### Photos & Electronics

- The Farm often takes pictures to use in its marketing materials. If you would prefer not to have your child's picture taken, please let us know at [info@natickfarm.org](mailto:info@natickfarm.org).
- Please ensure your child's electronics stay at home, except for essential medical devices. Children with cell phones for pick-up communication may bring those devices, but they must stay in the child's bag.

### Program Ratios

- Each program has a maximum of twelve spots unless otherwise indicated.
- Programs 1) for ages 3-5 and/or 2) that are held in the woods always have 2 teachers.

# Dressing for the weather

There's nothing more invigorating than a four-season, outdoor experience at the Natick Community Organic Farm! Proper dressing techniques, base layers, and outerwear are essential for your child's safety and fun. Remember: *"there's no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothes."*

While some of these guidelines are geared to younger children, parents of older youth should adapt this information accordingly.

## Spare clothing

**Please pack a full change of clothes (top(s), bottom(s), socks, underwear) in your child's backpack. These extra clothes are required for Sprouts, Woodland Adventures, and Fridays on the Farm.** You may give the farm educators another full change of clothes to be kept at the farm. These must be in a labeled zip-top bag or pouch. Please do not send extra clothes in tote bags, shopping bags etc. as these are very unwieldy in our limited storage space.

## Labels

Please label all of your children's belongings, especially outerwear, backpacks and water bottles.

## Getting dirty

We can, and will!, get dirty at the farm. That's part of the fun here. Please send clothes that can get dirty.

## Gear Recommendations - clothing

Cooler Weather	Warmer Weather
Best materials/fabrics all year round: synthetics (e.g. polypropylene), fleece, wool, silk. No cotton, as it does not insulate when wet.	
Two lighter layers are better than one heavy layer, as it allows children to more easily adjust for body temperature with changing weather and levels of activity.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Base layer: This is your wicking layer, designed to pull chilling moisture away from the body. We recommend a synthetic long sleeve and long pants, e.g. long underwear, athletic fabrics.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Base layer: We still recommend synthetic fabrics. On a dry day in late spring, a synthetic top and heavier-weight pants might be just enough.</li></ul>

- Second layer: This is your warming layer. Something “fuzzy” is generally the right thing, e.g. a fleece, wool sweater or long underwear, down jacket, fleece joggers.
- Third layer: **This is your waterproof layer.** E.g. winter coat, rain jacket, snow pants, puddle pants.

- Second layer: a warming layer may or may not be needed on warmer days. It never hurts to pack one, just in case. New England weather is infamously fickle.
- Third layer: **This is your waterproof layer.** E.g. rain pants, puddle pants.

### Required Footwear

Footwear protects the foundation of our bodies- our feet. All children must wear sturdy, closed-toe sneakers or boots. Rain boots are OK.

No sandals or flip-flops (this includes Crocs, Keens and Tevas). Kids without proper footwear may be sent home.

Snow boots are recommended for all winter programs.

### Winter-specific notes

Even on the coldest days, there are farm chores to do and nature to explore! This can be a challenging season for kids who aren’t used to the cold and/or aren’t warm enough.

*Upper body:* warm, waterproof layers. Two or three thin layers are always better than one thick layer, as they allow children to layer/de-layer as activity levels change.

*Hands:* gloves AND mittens are a must. This is usually the first part of a child’s body that gets chilled. Please pack:

- two pairs of knit stretchy gloves, as many kids like to keep their “stretchies” on during snack time AND
- at least 1 pair of **waterproof** mittens- roomy enough to fit “stretchies” underneath. A Velcro or elastic wrist is most manageable for small kids.

*Feet:* waterproof boots are a must.

*Head:* full coverage wool or fleece hat, balaclava or ski mask

**Staff favorites for used outdoor gear include:** Facebook marketplace, Framingham Savers, Geartrade.com, REI, Craigslist, local children’s resale stores.

**Places to buy new gear include:** REI, Natick Outdoor Store, Biddle and Bop, LL Bean, Polarn O. Pyret\*, Bog Boots (farm favorite, and a combined rain and snow boot)

\*Polarn O. Pyret Gear Discount (15% on full-price items)  
[https://www.polarnopyretusa.com/outdoor\\_schools](https://www.polarnopyretusa.com/outdoor_schools)  
 Click "Program Application"  
 Enter your information and provide the name and address

of the Forest Gnome program  
 Forest Gnomes  
 117 Eliot Street  
 Natick, MA 01760

## Behavioral Guidelines

We invite our guests to be happy, curious, engaged, and respectful when visiting the farm. NCOF is a working farm and we want you to be part of the process. We ask that all visitors help us care for the farm and animals by respecting the:

Animals	Farm and Environment	Group
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Quiet voices</li> <li>● Walking feet</li> <li>● Gentle hands</li> <li>● Respect the animal's home</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Move carefully around plants and fields</li> <li>● Clean up your space at the end of an activity</li> <li>● Respect the farmers' work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Listen to educators and peers</li> <li>● Show kindness towards others</li> <li>● Share with others</li> </ul>

Appropriate behavior is expected at all times. Inappropriate behavior will be addressed. Unacceptable behavior will be handled in a linear fashion.

1. At the first instance of unacceptable behavior, NCOF staff will discuss it with the child's caregiver. The Assistant Director of Education will email a follow up.
2. The second instance will result in the child being asked to leave for the day. The Assistant Director of Education will also follow up.
3. On the third event the child will be uninvited from participating in future Farm programming. This communication will come from the Assistant Director of Education.

Unacceptable behaviors include: cruelty to the animals, violence towards others, gross disrespect, bullying, swearing and foul language, blatant disregard towards educators, and willful destruction of crops, structures, or produce.

No refunds will be issued if a child is asked to leave a program due to poor behavior. Please note that the three step rule is subjective and will scale up if the first instance of behavior is severe.

### Behavioral Meeting

The Assistant Director and educators will call a behavioral meeting at either the second or third step, depending on the severity of the behavior. This meeting will determine if the child can return to the program.

## Health Policies and Guidelines

**Please keep our community's health in mind by keeping your child home if they are ill.** We make this request all year round, and certainly in our COVID era.

Please keep your child home if they have:

- a fever
- a persistent and/or productive cough
- a sore throat
- a runny nose that has just begun (in these cases, please keep your kiddo home for 2 program days, as this is likely when they are most contagious)
- new loss of taste or smell
- chills, muscle aches
- had 2+ cases of diarrhea in 24 hours

As well, if your child is placed on an antibiotic, they should remain home until they've been on the medication for 24 hours.

## COVID-19

Guidance and protocols are from the Commonwealth of MA and Town of Natick. Last updated May 25.

While masks are not required, any individual who wishes to continue to mask, including those who face higher risk from COVID-19, will be supported in that choice.

If your child is exposed to COVID:

- They may continue to attend programming so long as they remain symptom-free.
- Those who are able to mask\* do so until Day 10\*\*.
- Please test your child at home on Day 2 and Day 5 if at all possible. (Tests are recommended, not required.)

If your child tests positive for COVID:

- **They must stay home for 5 full days.** (Day of positive test result, plus 5 days.)
- If your child is able\* to wear a mask, they may return to programming on Day 6, so long as:
  - they are asymptomatic and/or symptoms are improving, **AND**
  - they have been fever-free for 24 hours, **AND**
  - they wear a mask through Day 10, *although masks can be removed as early as Day 6 so long as the child tests negative.*
- If your child is not able\* to wear a mask, they may return to programming, either:
  - on Day 11, if the child is not tested again, OR
  - *on Days 6-10, with a negative test*

\* “Able to” = whether the individual is unable to consistently wear a mask due to young age (2 or under) or medical or behavioral condition

\*\* Counting Days:

- Day 0, first day of symptoms OR day the positive test was taken, whichever is earlier