



2023 Summer Program Information



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Welcome to Summer 2023 at Natick Community Organic Farm!

Whether it's your first summer here or your fifteenth, thank you for choosing NCOF for summer programs.

We strive to create a safe, inclusive learning environment where children and young adults can learn and grow through hands-on experience at our working farm.

This handbook includes important information including packing lists, policies and initial logistics notes.

There are a few key things we ask you to do right now:

1. **Add communityprograms@natickfarm.org to your email inbox.** Email is the primary way we communicate with you, and adding our address to your contact list helps make sure our emails are delivered. We make every effort to ensure our emails are as deliverable as possible, but we can't guarantee it (nor can we be responsible for news you may have missed because emails went to spam!)
2. **Make note our new-for-2023 refund and transfer policies** (page 4).
3. **Double-check your program dates and times.** These can be found on your registration confirmation. Some of our programs are five days a week, some are four days a week- please check the schedule for your program! Please also note our holiday weeks:
 - a. Week of June 19. No programs Monday, June 19. All programs meet Tuesday – Friday, both AM and PM.
 - b. Week of July 3. No programs Monday July 3 or Tuesday July 4. All programs meet Wednesday – Friday, both AM and PM.
4. If your child requires an Epi-Pen or other medication, please complete our allergy form (page 12) and either 1) upload it during your online registration or 2) email it to us.

If you have any questions or concerns that are not answered in this handbook, please feel free to contact us: communityprograms@natickfarm.org or 508.644.2204 option 1.

We'll see you on the Farm!

Catherine Sullivan, MBA
Assistant Director

Natick Community Organic Farm
117 Eliot St, Natick MA 01760
communityprograms@natickfarm.org
508.655.2204 option 1

QUICK REFERENCE

Contact Info

communityprograms@natickfarm.org
508.655.2204 option 1

Cancellations + Transfers

Our full policy is enclosed in this handbook on page 4. Headlines:

- Refunds are issued prior to May 1, less a processing fee
- We do not issue refunds after May 1, but we will do our best to help move your registration to a different week
- Transfers are permitted on a space-available basis. A processing fee applies. The more notice you can give us, the more likely it is we can accommodate your request.

Holidays

There are no programs on: Monday, June 19
 Monday, July 3
 Tuesday, July 4

Program Hours

Programs for 8 and under are 3 hours long. Programs for ages 9+ are 3.5 hours. **If you have children in these two age groups, this means that their start and/or end times are different.** We offer optional, additional programs to give you one pick up and/or drop-off time.

	Ages 7 and under	Ages 8+
Morning Session	9 am – 12 pm Optional, additional early drop-off from 8:30 – 9 am. Sign up online.	8:30 am – 12 pm
There are no programs between 12 and 1 pm. Staff use this time to have lunch, rest, and regroup for the afternoon.		
Afternoon Session	1 pm – 4 pm Optional, additional extended day from 4 – 4:30 pm. Sign up online.	1 pm – 4:30 pm

Meeting Spots + Parking

More information on this is forthcoming and will be shared closer to the summer season. We anticipate that barn construction will continue through the summer, with changes to parking, pedestrian access, and meeting locations.

IMPORTANT POLICIES

Behavior Expectations

NCOF is proud to be known for offering high quality, hands-on education, and we hope your child/ren's summer experience will be a memorable one.

You can count on us to provide:

- High-quality educational programs
- Fun, hands-on learning
- A caring, inclusive community
- Staff committed to the growth, development and care of every child

We count on families to:

- Prepare your child for the day (water, snacks, sunscreen)
- Care for our community's health (e.g. keeping children who are ill or over-tired at home)
- Collaborate with farm educators on behavior notes/concerns

Bathroom Policy

- **To attend our programs, children must be fully potty-trained and require minimal assistance in toileting.** Farm educators can assist with changing clothes if needed, but do not change pull-ups. We offer regular toileting reminders and plenty of potty breaks to groups with young children- we know some kids find it hard to step away from the fun to use the bathroom!

Refunds

- We issue refunds on the following schedule. Fees are per child, per week, and dates are the date we receive your emailed refund request:
 - Prior to April 1: \$35 fee
 - Between April 1 and April 30: \$50 fee
 - **After May 1, we do not grant refunds for cancellations.** We will do our best to offer a transfer to an available session/week. Alternatively, you are welcome to send a different child (sibling, friend, family member) provided they meet the group's age requirements. Please email us to initiate this change.
- We do not issue refunds for child absence or illness, or if a child is asked to leave the program.
- If we need to cancel a session, you will receive a full refund.

Transfers/Changes

- Session changes/transfers will be accommodated on a space-available basis at the discretion of the Assistant Director. The more notice you give us, the more likely it is we can accommodate your request. The transfer fee is \$35/child/week until April 1, and \$50/child/week thereafter.

DATES AND TIMES

- Our summer season runs June 12 – August 18.
- No programs June 19, July 3 or 4.
- **Programs meet either morning *or* afternoon**, there are no full-day options this summer.
- **Please consult your registration for the specific dates + times of your program- these vary based on age.**
- Days of the week:
 - Programs for 9 and under meet Monday-Thursday only,
 - Programs for 10 and up meet Monday-Friday *mornings*, Monday-Thursday *afternoons*.
 - This schedule changes during our holiday weeks, please see below.
- Time of day:

Age	AM session	PM session
3-7	9 am – 12 pm	1 pm - 4 pm
Extended day for ages 3-7 (optional, additional, register online)	8:30 – 9 am	4 pm – 4:30 pm
8-15	8:30 am – 12 pm	1 pm – 4:30 pm

Monday – Thursday All weeks, except weeks of June 19 and July 4, when this is our Tuesday-Friday schedule		Friday All weeks, except weeks of June 19 and July 4, when our Monday – Thursday schedule is our Tuesday – Friday schedule	
Ages 3 – 7	Ages 8 - 15	Ages 3 – 7	Ages 8 - 15
8:30 – 9 am Optional, additional early drop off	8:30 am – 12 pm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing Farmers • Jr. Working Farmers • Working Farmers 	No programs for 3-7s on Fridays, except on our 2 holiday weeks, see note above.	8:30 am – 12 pm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jr. Working Farmers • Working Farmers
9 am – 12 pm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sprouts • Budding Farmers • Forest Explorers • Young Farmers 			
NO PROGRAMS 12 – 1 pm			
12 – 4 pm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sprouts • Budding Farmers • Woodland Wanderers • Young Farmers 	12 pm – 4:30 pm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing Farmers • Jr. Working Farmers • Working Farmers 		No afternoon programs on Fridays, except on our 2 holiday weeks, see note above.
4 – 4:30 pm Optional, additional extended day			

OTHER PROGRAM POLICIES

Early Drop Off/Late Pick Up

Our programs begin and end on time. This allows us to honor our commitments to program families and our hard-working team.

We offer specific early drop off and late pickup sessions to accommodate different groups' start and end times. Please register online. These are an optional, additional offering with a separate fee, and these sessions usually book up. These programs are offered by the week; we do not offer them by the day.

We are not able to accommodate same-day requests for early drop off/late pick up. Please register for these online, in advance.

We automatically charge a late pick-up fee after a 5 minute grace period. Example: a program ends at noon. We charge \$10 for a 12:05-12:15 pickup, \$20 for a 12:16 – 12:29 pickup, \$50 for 12:30 or later.

If a child is not picked up within 60 minutes of a program end *and* staff have not been able to reach any parent/guardian/caregiver contacts, we will assume an emergency exists and may contact the Town of Natick for assistance.

Self-Dismissal

If your child will be leaving the farm by themselves (e.g. they are walking or biking home), we need to know about that so that we can “check out” with your child before they leave our property. Please email or call us to discuss.

Ages

Children must turn the correct program age on or by the scheduled program week, unless an exception has been granted in advance by the Assistant Director.

Communications

Farm to Families. We will use:

- Email- primary mode of contact. **Please ensure communityprograms@natickfarm.org is added to your safe sender/contact list.**
- Telephone- last minute program changes, issues, child illness etc.

Families to Farm. We ask you to use:

- Email- primary mode of contact.
- Telephone- anything related to COVID or health, last minute changes, issues
- Communityprograms@natickfarm.org
- 508-655-2204 option 1

Key times you'll hear from us:

- Upon registration: you'll receive an automated receipt and welcome message (separate emails)

- Late April: final reminder of our May 1 refund deadline
- The Thursday or Friday prior to your week's programs: "pre-flight" briefing on parking, meeting spots etc.

Member Benefits

Current NCOF Members at the Crofter level and above save 20% on summer programs and get access to early registration on January 17, 2023.

Scholarships

Summer Scholarships are available. Please contact the Assistant Director via communityprograms@natickfarm.org

Weather

- Hot Weather
 - In high heat, staff will remind youth to hydrate, and take frequent group breaks. Staff will also plan lower-activity programming, taking breaks in the shade, and playing in the stream or hose.
 - We count on families to make the best decisions for their child's safety and comfort given the day's forecast. (Note from Catherine, Assistant Director: I can't think of a time a family has kept their kid home on a 100+ degree day and then said "I wish I'd just sent them to the farm!" You know your child best. Please choose what is best for them on exceptionally hot days. Kids acclimate differently to the hot weather.)
- As a working farm, we do not shut down or stop working due to rain, snow, or cold- our animals and crops need daily care year-round. However, for the children's health and safety, it's possible we would our educational programs if severe weather is forecast (e.g. a tornado, hurricane). In these rare events, we will communicate our plans with you.

Farm Educator Training

- Summer farm educators complete both background checks and a week of on-farm training (or equivalent) prior to programs beginning. This training includes CPR/First Aid (including EpiPen), COVID protocols, hazard awareness, and other health and safety trainings.

Additional 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. Appropriate behavior is always encouraged. 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"> • Quiet voices • Walking feet • Gentle hands • Respect the animals' home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move carefully around plants and fields • Clean up your space at the end of an activity • Respect the farmers' work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to educators and peers • Show kindness towards others • Share with others

Unacceptable and/or unsafe behavior can put your child, the other children, and the animals at risk. Behavior will be addressed by the teaching staff and escalated to the Assistant Director if/as needed. Staff will take support children struggling to follow these guidelines with steps such as 1:1 conversations, quieting activities, and/or a conversation with the Assistant Director.

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.

- At the first instance of unacceptable behavior, NCOF staff will discuss it with the child's caregiver. The Assistant Director will email a follow up.
- The second instance will result in the child being sent home for the day. The Assistant Director will also follow up in an email.
- If there is a third instance, the child will be unenrolled from subsequent programming this summer. This communication will come from the Assistant Director.
- Note: The Assistant Director and educators may call a behavioral meeting at either the second or third instance, depending on the severity of the behavior. This meeting will determine if the child can return to the program.

No refunds will be issued if a child is asked to leave a program due to unacceptable behavior.

Note that these steps are a guideline. If the first instance of inappropriate behavior is severe, we may escalate first steps as needed.

Buddy Requests

We honor buddy requests when possible. Please indicate on your registration form if you would like your child to be placed with a friend of the same age and in the same program. Both families must make the buddy request.

Staff : Child Ratios

- 1:6 -- Summer Sprouts, Forest Explorers, Woodland Wanderers, Budding Farmers, Young Farmers, Growing Farmers
- 1:7 -- Jr. Working Farmers & Working Farmers

Photo Policy

The Farm often takes pictures to use in its marketing materials. Families will receive a photo waiver during registration, which families can accept or decline. We will adhere to families' instructions from the waiver.

Aides

If your child needs to bring an aide who is not a parent, please contact us. Parents are not allowed to participate in programs.

Readying Your Child for Programs

Our farm is a community farm open to the public for free from dawn to dusk, 7 days a week. 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 help ease first-day jitters. With our busy summer season, we regret that we can't offer "try it" days.

PACKING LIST

Our clothing requirements are simple but important to keeping comfortable – skin protected from the elements, sturdy footing, and staying dry on rainy days. Nothing beats mucking out the chicken coop or exploring a stream with waterproof boots! Remember: *"There's no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothes."*

Spare Clothes

- Spare clothes are encouraged for kids of all ages.
- **A full change of clothes is required for Summer Sprouts, Forest Explorers, Woodland Wanderers, Budding/Young/Growing Farmers. Please pack a shirt, pants, socks, and underwear in your child's backpack.**

Getting Dirty: Clothing and footwear CAN and WILL get dirty this summer. Please help your child pick clothes accordingly.

Please label all clothes, boots, water bottles, and backpacks. Many companies make labels, and Sharpies and waterproof markers work too. We have a fundraising link with [Mabel's Labels](#) (the farm receives 20% of your purchase *at no additional cost to you*).

Summer New England weather can be fickle, so be sure that your child has the right gear for the (changing) weather.

Clothing	Footwear
<p style="text-align: center;">Must-Haves</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Base layer: t shirt or long sleeve. We recommend long sleeves for woodland programs to protect skin. • Second layer: something for cooler days or mornings- sweatshirt, fleece, long sleeve • Third layer: waterproof jacket for rainy days (rain pants optional) 	<p style="text-align: center;">Must-Haves</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Closed-toe shoes are required: sneakers, hiking boots, rain boots etc.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Shoes with holes are not allowed (no sandals, flip-flops, Crocs, Natives, Keens etc.)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">This is a safety requirement.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Kids without proper footwear may be sent home.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Nice-to-Haves</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sun protection: hat, sunglasses, long-sleeve shirt 	<p style="text-align: center;">Nice-to-Haves</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For younger children, water shoes for stream splashing

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

AT THE FARM

Parking

- Our parking and drop-off plan is in flux pending barn construction, Memorial School lot availability and other factors. We will update this document and communicate more details to you closer to your program date.

Meeting Spots

- We will send a map of the farm with these spots in our “pre-flight” email the week before your program. We are anticipating that barn construction will continue through the summer season, so we thank you in advance for your flexibility and support!

Water & Snacks

- Please pack a reusable water bottle and plenty of snacks for your child every day- young farmers need a lot of energy! Children will have many opportunities to refill their water bottle throughout the day. We encourage the use of reusable water bottles and snack containers.
- Due to the prevalence of nut allergies, we request **nut-free snacks, please.** Educators actively discourage food-sharing among the children, whether or not there are nut allergies present.
- We often sample farm produce. Please alert us to your child’s allergies.
- We discourage sweetened drinks (juice, soda, teas etc.) and heavily-sweetened snacks (e.g. fruit gummies) as these attract insects, which upsets many children.

Health and First Aid

- **If your child has a fever for any reason, please keep them home until they have been fever-free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medications.**
- If you have any concerns that your child may be contagious, or have a bug, please keep them home until symptoms subside.
- **EpiPens: We need to know if your child uses an EpiPen and/or has other severe allergies.** Families will be asked about allergies during registration and, if applicable, fill out an allergy form online. If your child's allergy info has changed after registration, please email us.
- **Sunscreen & Bug Spray:** Parents supply and apply both as needed. Please apply bug spray off the farm. Staff do not apply sunscreen to children, but we can talk kids through applying it to themselves.
- **First Aid:** Staff will wash scrapes and cuts with soap and water only, and apply a bandage. We will offer instant ice packs for bumps and/or bloody noses. We do not apply any topical products (e.g. antibiotic or anti-itch creams, antiseptic washes) or offer any oral medications. Summer staff receive first aid training from a licensed, outside trainer before programs begin.
- **Poison Ivy:** If your child has been exposed to poison ivy, we will instruct them on washing the affected area with Tecnu (a mineral-oil-based product), which removes the irritating oils of poison ivy. We will advise at pick-up if we think your child has been exposed to poison ivy.

Safety

Livestock

- Children enter pastures only under the guidance of a trained farm educator.
- Summer programs do not enter pastures with cows or mature male livestock.
- Programs with children under 12 do not enter pastures with adult pigs.

Weather

- Summer staff receive training in a host of weather-related safety topics including inclement weather and heat-related emergencies (e.g. sunburn, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke).

Electronics

Children may not use electronics on the farm during programs, including cell phones and cameras.

Lost & Found

A Lost & Found bin is located at the farm and is emptied frequently. Please ensure your child's items are labeled with their name. We do our best to help your child keep track of their items and track down items when they are lost, but of course we can't guarantee we'll find them.

NCOF Allergy Policy

Parents' Responsibilities

- Parents must notify NCOF of any risk of anaphylaxis or an anaphylactic reaction to any substance (food, insect bites, or drugs) at time of registration.
- Children must bring appropriate EpiPen kit and signed consent (see below) from a parent/guardian to allow for the injection to be given immediately in case of an emergency.
- Children and/or the farm educators will have the EpiPen with them at all times.

NCOF's Responsibilities

- NCOF will inform all parents that there is a child with severe allergies to nuts and peanuts participating in the program and ask not to bring in any snacks containing nuts or peanuts.
- Educators will supervise snack times to discourage sharing of food.
- Staff are trained in life-threatening allergies and EpiPen administration. Staff receive a list each week of children with severe allergies and their allergy protocol (e.g. EpiPen, Benadryl etc.)
- Emergency procedures in place for life threatening allergies.
- NCOF cannot guarantee a nut-free environment.

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NCOF Allergy Policy - EpiPen Consent Form

Student's Name: _____ Program Name _____

Session Dates & Times _____

As the parent or guardian of the above student, I understand NCOF's guidelines and that the Farm cannot guarantee a nut-free environment. I give permission to NCOF staff to administer an EpiPen injection or other prescribed medication(s) to the above student in the event of anaphylaxis or an anaphylactic reaction requiring such an injection.

Parent/Guardian's name (print): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____