

# At Work

## Oregon State University's Beginning Urban Farmer Apprenticeship (BUFA) in Portland, Oregon

Initiated in 2011, the Beginning Urban Farmer Apprenticeship (BUFA) is a season-long training for new and aspiring urban farmers conducted in and around Portland, Oregon by the Oregon State University (OSU) Extension Service and community partners. BUFA provides three options for participation to train urban and small-scale farmers and community land stewards in vegetable and fruit production and farm business management. BUFA helps participants to build a foundation in urban farming.

BUFA is a seven-month (season-long) program that offers small-scale urban farming education to the next generation of farmers, non-profit garden managers, food justice leaders, and local food entrepreneurs. The program teaches students basic skills in vegetable production, fruit production and the field of small-scale agriculture. BUFA helps participants develop connections and relationships with the organizations, farmers, food justice leaders, and businesses that make up our local food system. We help students explore local small-scale agriculture as a potential career path to help transform our local food system.



Through formal classes, hands-on training, field trips, direct marketing sales (Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) and restaurant sales) and online learning resources, BUFA provides a fun and interactive educational experience. Our focus on the fundamentals of small-scale urban farming makes this the perfect training for the novice farmer and gardener interested in community-scale food production. BUFA also includes online access to OSU Small Farms Program: Growing Farms- Successful Whole Farm Management Seminar Series. While participating in BUFA, participants connect with many local farmers and hear about the ups and downs of their food production enterprise. Participants also visit local farms and urban food based businesses to see how they really work. This networking, along with the practical growing experience, provides students with a strong foundation for work and/or volunteering in the fields of food production, food justice, and urban-scale agriculture.

### BUFA learning options:

There are three options available for participation in BUFA to meet educational and lifestyle needs:

**Option 1:** Market farming track- \$3,000 (550+ hours of instruction)

**Option 2:** Community farming track- \$1,500 (200+ hours of instruction)

**Option 3:** Classroom and field trip track- \$1,000 (100+ hours of instruction)

### BUFA learning objectives:

- Create management plan for urban farms and community landscapes with detailed analysis of benefits and drawbacks of various garden management practices
- Design and install urban-scale farm and landscape infrastructure





- Practice important farming skills and use tools safely and effectively
- Apply principles of healthy soil for healthy plants to gardens and landscape management
- Understand methods and products for organic Integrated Pest Management (IPM) including weed management options
- Analyze social aspects of urban farming, community gardening
- Perform marketing analysis and create a farm business plan
- Communicate learning with peers and the larger community

BUFA is made possible through various funding streams including: 1) fee-based educational programming, 2) farm sales, 3) grants and contracts with other public agencies and community partners that are also working to educate urban dwellers in agriculture, natural resource conservation, and business development.

The BUFA program has been validated by community partners that have provided in-kind donations (1.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) to date from primary partner Multnomah County), funding through competitive grants (\$130,000) unsolicited sponsorship (\$80,000) from West Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District. BUFA has also generated \$100,000 in program fees and farm sales through four trials of the course. Many BUFA graduates (40 of 86) are continuing to advance their careers in urban agriculture including starting small-scale operations and working on farms and non-profit organizations.

Extension programs in urban areas should consider farming training programs that capture the passion and interest of new and aspiring farmers that want to contribute toward the local food movement. This audience likely does not know about Extension and the research-based information and services

that we provide for urban areas. It is critical to work with community partners with well-developed networks to break into urban-based Extension programming focused on food production, natural resource conservation, and business development.

**For more information about this project, please contact:**



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