

Growing Farmers Training Program Land Needs

1. Within 10 miles of Lincoln.
2. Minimum 20 tillable acres (level ground), with additional for access, parking, etc.
3. Long term lease agreement (5 year minimum), potential to buy in the future.
4. Good water. Need to be able to have a well or a pond that is not salty.
5. Good soil. Silts and loams much better than predominant clay. No toxic substances.
6. Fairly level ground. Well-drained. Not in a flood zone.

About the Growing Farmers Training Program

- SUMMARY: Number of participants, number of CSA and market sales, sales volume, and participant skills have all grown every year since the program began in 2005. Organizationally, CROPS is a well-networked and respected non-profit in the community that is sought out for advice on developing small farm training programs in other areas of the state and region.
- 20 farm businesses have been started between 2007-2009.
- 110 people have grown produce at Sunset and/or attended farm trainings hosted by CROPS since 2005.
- CROPS has expanded the CSA each year of the project. It began in 2006 with 12 members, and has grown to 114 shares in 2010.
- 2005-2006: Site preparation began at Sunset Community Farm. 5 people grew food there for their own families. Minimal amounts were sold.
- 2007: 8 people attended one or more workshops. \$6500 of produce was sold by beginning farmers at Sunset.
- 2008: 9 people attended one or more workshops. \$8700 worth of produce was sold by beginning farmers at Sunset.
- 2009: 24 people attended one or more workshops, and 6 participants grew and sold at Sunset Community Farm. \$12,860 worth of produce was sold by beginning farmers at Sunset.
- 2010: 28 people attended one or more workshops. 7 participants are growing at Sunset Farm this year. Advanced participants are growing on larger plots. A projected \$20,000 worth of produce will be sold. 1 participant has graduated and is raising vegetables and broilers independently on rented land.

Timeline

Current: Identify potential sites

Early 2011: Write and sign lease agreement

Summer 2011: Test soil, add organic amendments as necessary, plant cover crops; Add any necessary infrastructure such as water, electricity, structures

Fall 2011: Move all farmers to the new site



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**HELPING PEOPLE WORK TOGETHER TO GROW
HEALTHY FOOD AND LIVE SUSTAINABLY**

Community CROPS and Sunset Community Farm

In 2005, two years after starting the first community garden in Lincoln, Community CROPS partnered with a retired farmer and private landowner to break ground at what would become Sunset Community Farm. Located at SW 40th and W. F St., the vision for this site was to create a space for immigrants and refugees to start market farm businesses growing food to sell within their ethnic communities and the community at large.

The success of the program and the participants' farms has been great, and demand for land and training continues to grow. With 4 tillable acres at the site, only 4-5 families of the 25-30 workshop participants can participate in the land training each year. In addition, road and overpass expansion by the city at SW 40th is reducing the space even more.

These issues have led CROPS to begin the search for a larger, permanent site for its Growing Farmers Training Program and Community Farm. Our vision is a 20-30 acre property where immigrants, refugees and low-income families can gain skills in small-scale, organic market farming. This is an opportunity for them to provide income for their families and provide Nebraskans with fresh, local, sustainable food.

Over the past 5 years, many families have grown food for local markets at Sunset, representing countries such as Iraq, Bosnia, Mexico, Vietnam, Togo, Pakistan and the US. These farms have yielded diverse vegetables, and supplied many tables in the Lincoln area with fresh, local, sustainably-grown produce. Participants sell through the CROPS Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program, the Old Cheney Road Farmers' Market, the Nebraska Food Cooperative, and to many supportive local grocery stores and restaurants.

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