

Old Fort Market Garden Incubator Program

Old Fort at Hesperus

18683 Hwy 140; Hesperus, CO 81326



Since 2013, The Old Fort Market Garden Incubator Program has served dozens of young & beginning farmers, many of whom are still farming or working in food-related careers. Each year, new and returning farmers grow thousands of pounds of produce for the local community. The mission of the program is to provide an entry point for young and beginning farmers in the Four Corners region, giving them the support and skills necessary to succeed. One of the only educational farms specializing in high-elevation desert farming, this program is uniquely positioned to support farmers wishing to work in arid mountain environments.

This project is a partnership between Fort Lewis College, State Land Board, LaBoca Center for Sustainability and Colorado Department of Agriculture Specialty Crop program.

History:

2009- 2012: Farm incubator idea was developed utilizing funds from LaBoca Center for Sustainability to construct wildlife fencing and basic irrigation structures on 6.5 acres. Mike Nolan served as the trial incubator for two years to assist with establishing irrigation and identifying potential crop plans. Received a grant from Colorado Department of Agriculture Specialty Crop block grant program to provide training, equipment and mentorship.

2013: First class of seven market garden incubators were selected and completed training. The Old Fort Market Garden Cooperative was formed for incubator participants allowing them to purchase required general and product liability insurance as a group.

2014: Installed 12x12 walk-in cooler and 12 x 20 cold storage. Received second Specialty Crop Block Grant to assist with marketing and promotion. Ten participants in program.

2015: Added hand washing stations to fields, provided potable water system for wash station and made major upgrades to root cellar space. Developed Old Fort Market Garden logo and promotional materials and began a Summer and Fall CSA utilizing produce from incubators and the education gardens. Seven participants in the program.

2016: Summer CSA (40 shares), Fall CSA (20 shares), sales to Sodexo and four different farm stands utilized produce from farmers. The 12 x 20 cold storage is converted to cooler space and additional upgrades made to root cellar. Six incubator farmers and 3 Farmers in Training complete the program. Received third Specialty Crop Block Grant to assist with developing Farmer in Training program and assist graduates with finding land.

2017: Drip irrigation expanded to 2.25 acres. Eight farmers and 3 Farmers in Training complete the program.

Proposed Schedule for 2018:

Reapplication, new incubator and farmer in training forms available for 2018 growing season: November 1st

All applications due: Friday, December 8 at 5 pm MST

Application review and Interviews: Dec 11 – Dec 18

2018 Incubators and Farmers in Training selected by December 18, 2017

Training/Planning classes begin: Jan 2018 – April 2018

2018 Incubators begin in field: May 1, 2018

2018 Incubators finished in the field: October 1, 2018

Market Garden Incubator Information:

What we provide (\$) = additional fee:

- Access to land and water
- Access to hand tools and weed eaters

- Basic land preparation in Spring including bed shaping, Fall Tilling and planting of cover crop.
- Basic irrigation infrastructure (2.0 acres drip with ability to overhead as well)
 - Two electric pumps located on North end of field
 - Entire drip irrigation system will be provided for 1/8 of an acre for first year incubators
 - All materials after the pressure regulator will become property of farmer
 - Materials for subsequent acreage and years will be responsibility of farmer (\$)
- Educational classes
 - Curriculum and specialty topic books
 - Incubators will begin meeting in late January (9/10 classes that are 3 hours each).
 - Topics will include:
 - Business Planning; Crop Culture; Crop Planning; Introduction to Soils, Soil Fertility and Cover Crops; Transplant Production and Irrigation basics;
 - Recordkeeping, Vegetable Post-Harvest Handling and Food Safety; Marketing options; Weed and Pest Management; Vegetable Diseases;
- Hands-on training at incubator site (end of April and second week of May)
 - Irrigation Systems, Season Extension, Equipment for Small Farms, In-Field training for irrigation system
- Assistance with developing Business Plan will be available during Winter Training
- On-farm mentorship during growing season
- Assistance and monitoring of recordkeeping system during growing season
- Basic harvest/processing facility
- Access to cooler space (\$) and root cellar space (\$)

What we require from you:

- Remain in Good Standing
 - Completion of required training (see below)
 - Staying current on payment schedule of all fees
 - Adherence to all site guidelines
 - Farm businesses must be in good standing to take the field on May 1.
 - Farm businesses that are not in good standing during the season will lose privileges to resources outside their field (ie: marketing assistance, coolers, processing shed, etc.)
- Business Plan including marketing plan
 - Resources: Ag Plan: (<https://www.agplan.umn.edu/>)
- Membership in Old Fort Market Garden Cooperative (\$25/year)
- Farm Liability Insurance
 - Each incubator will need to carry at least \$1 million general and product liability policy.
 - This insurance is available through the Old Fort Market Garden Cooperative
- Prompt payment of all fees according to schedule.
 - Feb 1: Acceptance Fee and signed form Due
 - March 1: 25% of Field Fee due
 - April 1: 25% of Field Fee due
 - May 1: 50% of Field Fee due
 - June 1: Cooperative Membership and Insurance payment (payable to San Juan RC&D) due
 - July 1: 50% of Land Access Fee due
 - August 1: 25% of Land Access Fee due
 - September 1: 25% of Land Access Fee due
- Attendance at required trainings sessions during Winter and Spring:

- Year 1 Farmers and Farmer in Training Participants
 - Attend 9 of 10 classes and both work days
- Year 2 and 3 Farmers
 - Attend 7 of 10 classes, lead one class discussion and attend both work days
- Year 4 and 5 Farmers
 - Attend 5 of 10 classes, make presentation and attend both work days
- Only illness or family emergencies will excuse absences beyond the allowable number.
- Sign and Adhere to Site Guidelines
 - Site guidelines must be signed before farmer can begin work in the field
- Commitment to project
- Developed crop plan by April meeting
- Provide necessary seed/transplants, special equipment and harvesting supplies
- Recordkeeping skills and reports of production and marketing data
- Meet with project director in April, July and at end of season
- Maintenance and irrigation of plot during growing season
 - Time needed per week will vary with crop and plot size
- Adhere to organic practices and submit any proposed inputs to management
- Adherence to food safety protocol set by GAP and Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA)
- Adherence to Fair Labor Standards Act laws regarding internships, apprenticeships and volunteer labor.
- Completion of season by October 1, 2018
- Completion of year-end checklist required for re-application.

2018 Proposed Fees

Acceptance Fee:

\$50 non-refundable acceptance fee due at first winter education class

Field Fee:

\$300 per business per year for up to ½ acre; \$550 per business per year for ½ acre or more

These funds will allow us to provide spring tillage, bed shaping, maintain irrigation system and harvest shed, purchase specialized tools for communal use, service weed eaters, provide field bathrooms, complete fall tillage and plant cover crop.

Land and Water Access Fees:

Land and Water Access Fees					
<u>Plot Size</u>	<u>Year 1</u>	<u>Year 2</u>	<u>Year 3</u>	<u>Year 4</u>	<u>Year 5</u>
1/16 acre	\$62.50	\$125	\$187.50	\$250	\$312.50
1/8 acre	\$125	\$250	\$375	\$500	\$625
¼ acre	\$250	\$500	\$750	\$1,000	\$1,250
½ acre	\$500	\$1000	\$1500	\$2,000	\$2,500
1 acre	\$1,000	\$2,000	\$3,000	\$4,000	\$5,000

Cooperative and Insurance Costs:

Old Fort Market Garden Cooperator Membership fee: \$25/year

This membership gives you access to general and product liability insurance (required) at a reduced rate:

2017 insurance rates: 1/8 acre: \$150 ¼ acre: \$200 1 acre: \$350

Additional fees:

Root Cellar: \$100/bay/month Cooler space: \$50/month

You are responsible for bed shaping if desired. Outside contractors must have appropriate insurance.

We anticipate that total costs for 1/8 acre will be approximately \$1,200 for year 1 if you do not have any growing or harvesting supplies.

Special Notes:

Growing areas are not certified organic but organic practices will be used by incubators

Housing is not available on site.

No greenhouse space is available. Incubators may construct low tunnels on plots.

No perennial plantings in individual plots.

All crops and irrigation must be removed by October 1st to allow us to plant cover crop.

Additional Information

www.tinyurl.com/OIncubator

<https://www.fortlewis.edu/oldfort/SustainableAgriculturePrograms.aspx>

www.facebook.com/oldfortathesperus

Instagram: [_theoldfort_hesperus](#) and [#theoldfort](#)

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