

Ecology Action's  
GROW BIOINTENSIVE®  
2-Month Summer Internship Program  
Information Booklet

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# Summary

Ecology Action will be offering our two-month summer program for its third consecutive year that will teach small-scale, low input farming methods. The program will take place at several locations in Northern California from June 15th through August 14th. Program interns will learn practical skills that address issues of food insecurity through a combination of hands-on fieldwork and classroom teaching. The techniques taught will be a closed system, soil building, organic approach to food production. In addition interns will learn about positive social solutions to food insecurity. The program will run simultaneously with Ecology Action's 6-month intern program, hosting farmers and activists from the U.S. and abroad, giving summer interns a chance to network with people interested in similar work.

Despite technological advances in agriculture there are still more than 1 billion malnourished people in the world.<sup>1</sup> Rising food prices have led to political unrest in many countries.<sup>2</sup> In addition to the social problems of our global food system, current farming practices are unsustainable. Conventional agricultural techniques depend heavily on non-renewable resources, outside inputs from other soils, and degrade farmable soil. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization has stated that the solution to these problems can be found in small scale, localized, low-input agriculture:

“Global food production is more than enough to feed the global population, the problem is getting it to the people who need it. In market-marginalized areas, organic farmers can increase food production by managing local resources without having to rely on external inputs or food distribution systems over which they have little control and/or access.”<sup>3</sup>

Aware of the intensifying world challenges and the basic need of people to feed themselves, Ecology Action has been working for over 40 years to develop an elegant, small-scale agricultural system. This system, known as GROW BIOINTENSIVE, is a high-yielding, sustainable agricultural method that emphasizes local food production and is based historically on intensive food raising systems. Ecology Action has a network of affiliate organizations and former interns working around the world to enable people to promote food security.

This two-month internship will be an opportunity to learn valuable techniques and information, to experience an alternative living style, to make lifelong ties with other interns from different states and countries. Interns will be assisting Ecology Action in accomplishing important work that can help farmers, gardeners, and communities around the world to raise food, conserve resources and build fertile soil sustainably. The program will be a combination of lectures, study, garden work, and living the method. Once interns have completed their stay it is hoped they will engage in public service for food security in community across the country and around the world.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-11503845>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/damian-carrington-blog/2011/aug/25/food-price-arab-middle-eastprotests>

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, <http://www.fao.org/organicag/oa-faq/oa-faq7/en>

# Program Information

The two-month summer program will immerse participants in all aspects of biologically intensive food raising. Interns will learn practical skills through their involvement in day-to-day farm work. In the classroom they will learn about and discuss growing techniques and concepts, global and local issues on food access and why our work is important. By the end of the program, interns will have gained hands on experience and an understanding of the designing, planning and management of a small-scale biologically intensive mini-farm. Interns will also have the opportunity to take farm tours to other Ecology Action project sites and local farms.

The GROW BIOINTENSIVE method focuses on using small-scale, organic, non-mechanized food raising techniques as a way of life. The work we do requires commitment, responsibility, patience, attention to detail, willingness to follow detailed instructions, self-motivation, and mental and physical stamina. While we do not wish to discourage those genuinely interested in the program, we also want to make sure that applicants have an adventurous, hardy nature and can make a dedicated commitment to the program for the duration of the interns.

The Internship will start on the 15th of June and will end on the 14th of August. Interns must arrive at least 1 day in advance at each site to get settled and acquainted with the area.

## Schedule and Routine

Interns days typically start around 8am and finish anywhere from 6- 8pm with a 2 to 3 hour siesta mid - day. Most days will be spent working in the garden. A typical day could involve preparing beds for planting, seed propagation, harvesting, taking and recording samples, transplanting, seed saving, and other garden tasks. At least one day a week and some times more will be spent in the classroom. Classroom days will include lectures, discussions and multimedia covering a range of topics. Interns will have readings and homework to complete each week.

At least one day a week will be spent inside the classroom. The interns will have weekly readings and homework pertaining to the practical and conceptual aspects of GROW BIOINTENSIVE and food security issues around the world. Interns will also work in the gardens of the respective sites and should enjoy physical labor. At least one and a half days and as much as two days a week will be free for personal time. The experience is demanding but rewarding to those willing to engage themselves.

Note that Ecology Action is a non-profit organization focused on teaching motivated people about the principles of small scale, sustainable food raising and community involvement. It is not a market farm. If you are looking for experience in production and marketing on an organic farm, visit WWOOF or ATTRA. Also, we appreciate that people who are interested in sustainable agriculture are interested in exploring other methods. Please note though, that this internship will focus primarily on the GROW BIOINTENSIVE method. For more information about this method you may visit: [http://www.growbiointensive.org/grow\\_main.html](http://www.growbiointensive.org/grow_main.html)

# Curriculum

During the course of the program the following topics will be covered:

## **The Theory and Principles of GROW BIOINTENSIVE mini-farming:**

- Bed preparation
- Compost
- Compost crops
- Diet
- Sustainability
- Fertilizers / fertility
- Seed propagation
- Garden planning
- Seed collection/saving
- Human waste recycling
- Insects and diseases

## **Social issues of small-scale farming and food insecurity:**

- History of small scale intensive agriculture
- Social causes and responses to world food insecurity
- Organizational development
- Issues facing commercial growers
- Access to seed

Interns will have several books and publications that they will use for readings and design projects. By the end of the program interns will have created their own design for a mini farm. They will also have the opportunity and help to formulate a project that seeks to meet a need in their community.

## Internship Expenses

Applicants should note that this is an unpaid, fee-based internship program. Program interns will be placed at four different project sites in Northern California. Housing /accommodations will be provided at each site, with the exception of our Palo Alto internship positions which are offered at a discounted price (\$2025) to those able to secure their own room and board. However, other expenses will need to be provided by interns who are accepted to the program, as follows. (Please note that these internship fees are non-refundable. Partial scholarships may be available to those who qualify)

### **Summer Expenses must be submitted no later than June 1, 2015, and will include:**

- Program tuition, \$1500;
- Farm Tours, \$100;
- Textbooks and publications \$125;
- Housing, energy and internet \$450
- Food, \$300; ;
- Incidental living expenses for the duration of the program \$300.

### **TOTAL Due (Payable to Ecology Action, non-refundable): \$2,775**

Note: A \$500 deposit is due within one week of acceptance

Not included in the tuition is personal travel to and from the internship site, which will vary per participant. All participants are responsible for any travel expenses associated with this program.

*\*Note: From the funds deposited above, interns will receive a personal check from Ecology Action for \$150 at the beginning of each month of the internship program for his or her own food and incidentals expenses. Requiring interns to provide this money ahead of time guarantees the interns have funds to support themselves through the entire internship program. If you have questions about expenses please email [contact@growbiointensive.org](mailto:contact@growbiointensive.org))*

## Program Sites

The program will take place at four different sites in Northern California. Each site is unique in climate, soil, living situation, and history. We cannot guarantee that you will be placed at your preferred site.

### Ecology Action's Common Ground Research Garden (Willits, CA)

The setting at this site is rural and rustic. The Ecology Action mini-farm provides a demonstration of what is possible when conditions are less than optimal. The one-third-acre mini-farm/garden is located on a 20-acre site that offers a challenging soil situation on a mountainside slope. Basic field testing compares different cultivars, nutrient and compost amounts, crop spacing, and other practices. Also, there are usually a variety of crops grown out to seed for Bountiful Gardens, our international mail order company. The soil at this site is rated fair for grazing and has a level of magnesium, nickel, and other minerals that would normally prevent the growing of crops. In addition, it has cool nighttime temperatures and varied mini-climates within its growing area. GROW BIOINTENSIVE practices are buffering these limitations, and food is being grown (although lower-than-normal GROW BIOINTENSIVE yields were initially and are often still obtained). Ground was broken for the Biointensive research garden in 1982. It took 14 years of soil improvement (from 1982 to 1995) to develop a soil system that produces healthy plants and satisfactory yields at this location.

### Golden Rule Community Garden (Willits, CA)

This training site is a joint program with the Christ Church of the Golden Rule Community just south of Willits, CA and Ecology Action. The Golden Rule Community mini-farm/garden is located on Ridgewood Ranch, a 5,000-acre home to the Golden Rule Community, a therapeutic riding program, a large herd of free-range cattle, and acres of wilderness. The one-acre garden site has been organically cultivated for over 30 years and in 2001 adopted the Biointensive methods of food raising. Due to its location within a large alluvial flood plain, the garden contains fluffy, rich, uniform soil on flat terrain that lead to good garden yields. While the climate provides slightly warmer temperatures for growing throughout the day than our other Willits site, at night the cool air settles in the valley creating a difficult temperature swing daily. Its main focus is on providing food for the Golden Rule Community, growing an array of seeds for Bountiful Gardens, and training interns and other visitors in Biointensive gardening. It also has the unique opportunity to focus on low-tech alternative technology and processing within the garden and for cleaning seeds. The Golden Rule mini-farm demonstrates what is possible using GROW BIOINTENSIVE under reasonably good conditions and in the summer is a treat for anyone to see! It is beneficial for the training of trainers and staff for projects focusing on production mini-farming and development mini-farming in this and other countries.

### The Green Belt (Mendocino, CA)

The Greenbelt Program site in Mendocino, California is situated on the grounds of the Stanford Inn, an eco-resort nestled on the cliffs overlooking the confluence of the Big River and the Pacific Ocean. Our program is focused on: developing the GROW BIOINTENSIVE model for our coastal, cool, foggy climate, improving the soil and teaching the GROW BIOINTENSIVE method. There are many challenges at the site that create opportunities to demonstrate practical and effective ways of maximizing resources and managing fertility. There is an inherently good soil here but it underwent years of compaction as a horse paddock. We are working to build soil structure and fertility to restore the soil health. We experiment with growing complete diets and different crop varieties to find which are best suited to this unique growing climate. Our internships are unique and offer a great experience in water conservation, soil fertility management and food raising through the GROW BIOINTENSIVE method.

### Common Ground (Palo Alto, CA)

Located in Palo Alto, California, the Common Ground Garden is devoted to growing a GROW BIOINTENSIVE mini-farm as an educational, community resource. The use of the half-acre-plus site, of which only part is currently in crops, is donated to Ecology Action for the development of an edible oasis in this asphalt-and-lawn friendly suburb. This site's main focus is to model a truly sustainable food system for Bay Area Residents. This garden demonstrates to potential to grow both a major amount of nutrition and calories within the confines of a suburban lot, showing people just how much they can grow in their own backyards. We especially enjoy growing crops rarely seen within city limits, such as wheat, barley, and flour corn, because they help our visitors make the connection between the most ubiquitous parts of the American diet, and the land. We partner with the Common Ground Organic Garden Supply and Education Center to bring classes to the community as a whole, and we are developing programs to open the garden up to local schools for their use as a living classroom. Our internship is an immersive experience in growing both soil and community through the GB method.

## Follow-Up Activities

One of the unique aspects of this internship program is that we will allow you time throughout the summer to plan your next steps after the internship. It is expected that graduates of the internship program will be prepared to use their gained knowledge in some project within their home community, their school, or in some other way to help promote sustainable food raising. During the internship, participants will be able to work with a staff member to help plan and work through their future activities.

# About Ecology Action

Ecology Action is a non-profit tax-exempt organization based in Willits California. It operates an organic gardening supply and educational center in Palo Alto, an heirloom seed company in Willits, and research/demonstration gardens in Willits, Mendocino, and Palo Alto, CA. Ecology Action currently has affiliated partner organizations in five other countries. The organization conducts research and apprentice training in the GROW BIOINTENSIVE method, as well as publishes and distributes information about its method around the world.

Ecology Action founded the Common Ground research and community garden in Palo Alto in 1971 and began the formal apprentice program in 1977. Since then, low-input and high-yield farming has been studied in training/research gardens under the direction of John Jeavons. The years of work have resulted in positive, paradigm changing new ideas for the abatement of world hunger, for family food sufficiency and for urban and rural small-scale farming. Our goal is to give more people the capability of raising their own food while nurturing the earth for posterity.

The GROW BIOINTENSIVE method has been developed as a sophisticated, low technology food security safety net for people in virtually all climates and soils where food is grown. It seeks to build on thousands of years of traditional smallholder farming methods. Long-term sustainability is a crucial requirement and the work is completely manual. The system includes eight important aspects: double-dug raised beds, composting, intensive planting, companion planting, carbon farming, calorie farming, open-pollinated seeds, and a whole-system approach. This method offers people a way to produce nutritious diets despite having fewer resources. Lack of access to water and land as well as inability to purchase outside inputs like fertilizers are challenging problems to tackle within the framework of conventional agriculture. GROW BIOINTENSIVE seeks to address these challenges by minimizing the need for outside resources and maximizing the use of available land. In addition, GROW BIOINTENSIVE creates a more sustainable system of farming that does not use chemicals and can increase soil fertility.

For more information, you may visit our website at <http://www.growbiointensive.org/>

## HOW TO APPLY

To apply for this internship, please fill out our secure online application, which you can find at <http://www.growbiointensive.org/SummerInternship>. Applications will be accepted through May 1st, 2015. Candidates will receive notice of acceptance no later than May 15th, 2015. If you have any questions, please email [contact@growbiointensive.org](mailto:contact@growbiointensive.org).

***If you are accepted, you must send 1) a signed hard copy of the release form (following page), 2) a valid proof of insurance to the address listed on the form, and 3) a deposit to secure your place in the program.***

ECOLOGY ACTION  
COMMON GROUND MINI-FARM  
5798 Ridgewood Road, Willits CA 95490-9730  
Phone: (707) 459-0150 Fax (707) 459-5409

**RELEASE FORM**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Male / Female: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Country of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Country: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a heart condition, back condition, or other present and/or pre-existing conditions that could limit your full participation in the physical activities of this internship?

If so please describe in detail:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Please list any medications you are currently taking:

\_\_\_\_\_

Date of last medical examination:

\_\_\_\_\_

Please provide your current primary/catastrophic medical insurance coverage information

Carrier: \_\_\_\_\_ Policy No: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Waiver:**

I hereby certify that I am in good physical condition and do hereby release, acquit and discharge ECOLOGY ACTION, its staff, officers and members, of any and all claims, causes of action or damages whatsoever, in any way arising out of or in any manner connected with their program or any medical treatment rendered in event of need. I understand that I am responsible for the coverage any medical expenses during my time at Ecology Action.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_