Cultivating the Success of Beginning Farmers

Introduction to Becoming a Farmer Mentor

Your Small Farm 2018 Webinar Series

March 5, 2018

Webinar Tips

- Close all other programs running on your computer
- Check your sound – problems with clarity, speed, etc. switch to the phone
  - Call-in number provided in the welcome email
  - Mute computer sound when using phone
- **Type in questions for speakers** (or for help with viewing & sound) **into question box**
- Handouts are available to download on your computer

Tonight's Presenters

Diane Green
Greentree Naturals
Sandpoint, Idaho

Melissa Lines
SkyLines Farm
Harvard, Idaho

Moderator
Colette DePhelps
Community Food Systems University of Idaho Extension

Cultivating Success Farmer Mentor History

- We have hosted nine Farmer Mentor Training sessions since 2004 across the region.
- 78+ farmers have gone through this training program.
- We have had over 3,000 students go through our assorted sustainable agriculture programs since 2000.

Introduction to Becoming a Farmer Mentor

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Mentoring is teaching in a variety of instructional situations:

- Student interns for undergrad, graduate, or continuing education credits through a college or university
- On-farm intensives
- Farmer-to-farmer mentorships
- Presenting workshops or seminars
- Training farm labor or employees
- Offering one-on-one consultations
- Short courses and lectures

Who is this training for?

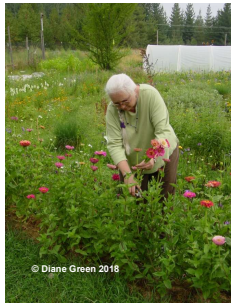
The Farmer Mentor Handbook and training was developed for experienced farmers who may or may not already have a mentorship program in place and are looking for ways to improve their mentoring skills.

What is a Farmer Mentor?

- In addition to farming knowledge, expertise and experience, farmer mentors need to be familiar with specific skills in order to facilitate the learning process effectively.
- Teaching is the primary role of mentoring others.

What is a Farmer Mentor?

- Past experience is one of the most valuable resources you have for creating an educational program that will be thorough yet simple enough for a beginning farmer to absorb.
- Farmer Mentors who are able to reflect on their own experiences and learn from them are much more successful in their mentorships with beginner farmers.



Benefits of Being a Farmer Mentor

- Mentoring is more than the transfer of knowledge, guidance and insights to a learner.
- Mentoring also offers tangible benefits that can reward *you*, both personally and professionally.

More Benefits of Becoming a Farmer Mentor

- **Improved listening and relationship building skills**
- **Becoming more confident and organized**
- **Strengthens the lessons you've already learned**
- **Development & improved personal leadership and coaching skills**
- **Enhancing people management and relationship building skills**
- **Exposure to fresh perspectives and ideas**

Why do you want to be a Farmer Mentor?

- As you think about becoming a farmer mentor, it's useful to first identify your own interests and needs. Why?

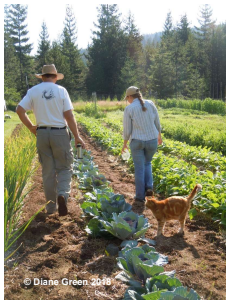
  Because you and your mentees will benefit the most from a mentoring program that fits BOTH of you – a program you're excited about and comfortable with.

Choosing a Mentoring Program That's Right For You

- What time commitment can I make?
- What times of year do I want to mentor?
- How many days a week is optimal for me?
- What age of person would I like to work with?
- What material do I feel confident teaching?

Mentoring Skills
What makes a good Farmer Mentor?

- One of the key responsibilities of being a good farmer mentor is to provide guidance and productive feedback to their mentee.
- In addition to having experience and expertise, mentors need to have specific skills in order to foster the learning process.



What type of mentoring program do you want to conduct?

- Do I want to help someone learn a specific farming related skill, pursue an interest, do on-farm research, earn college credits?
- Do I want a mentee living on the farm?
- How many days a week do I want to mentor someone?
- How much time am I willing to invest?

A good Farmer Mentor is someone who:

- Has a sincere desire to be involved with a beginner farmer and wants them to succeed.
- Has experience & knowledge and is willing to teach their skills.
- Is willing to be available in person, by phone, texts, or email, to help guild a relationship & answer questions.
- Has patience & understands that people learn at different speeds & with different learning styles.

A good Farmer Mentor is someone who:

- Provides guidance with constructive feedback.
- Has active listening skills.
- Has the ability to see solutions and opportunities.
- Has flexibility.
- Is supportive & offers encouragement.
- Has time and energy to devote to mentoring others.

What Skills and Experience Do You Need To Be a Farmer Mentor?

- Should be proficient in record keeping for planning, production, and marketing.
- Have the ability to deliver information and instruction in a clear & thorough manner.

Other Useful Qualities in a Good Farmer Mentor

It is important to respect individuality and unique backgrounds in dealing with learners of different genders, political affiliations, cultural or religious beliefs.

Tips for Effective Farmer Mentor/Learner Relationships

- Whether you are mentoring an intern/apprentice, a graduate student for an on-farm research project, hosting an on-farm field day, or conducting any other type of farmer-to-farmer mentorship... some basic guidelines will improve your experience.

Assess Your Mentoring Skills

Once you've determined that you have an the interest and time to commit to being a farmer mentor, it is crucial that you take an inventory of your mentoring skills.

TEACHING SKILLS

- There are many ways to develop your program for working with adult learners in different types of mentoring arrangements. It is a good idea to consider not only what you will teach, but think about what does the learner need to learn?

Set Goals & Define Expectations

It is important to identify what you expect from this relationship right down to logistical issues of when, where, and how frequently to meet.

- Who are you going to teach?
- What is their background?
- Will some participants need more training than others?
- What kind of instruction should you develop?
- How many people do you want in attendance?

Take Time to Reflect

- It is important to take a close look at your time and energy related to the mentorship. One of the most common challenges in any kind of mentor/mentee relationship is finding sufficient time to do everything you've outlined in your goals.

Is On-Farm Mentoring Right for You?

- The *"On-Farm Mentor's Guide, Practical Approaches to Teaching On The Farm"* from the New England Small Farm Institute has developed a series of self-assessment worksheets to give both aspiring and practicing farmer mentors a framework for evaluating their mentoring aptitude.
- http://www.smallfarm.org/main/for_on_farm_mentors/

Self Evaluation for Becoming a Farmer Mentor

It is not unusual to be familiar with specific skills but still not feel comfortable using them.

For example, you may have participated in a training for public speaking, but this training doesn't mean you're comfortable speaking in front of a large group.

Questions for Diane?

Poll #1

Are you ready to be a Farmer Mentor?

- Absolutely!
- I think I am
- Probably
- Not sure yet
- No!

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There's more than one way to mentor

simple . . . . . complex

- Easy answers over the phone to a beginning farmer who wants an hour or two of your input. >> May be ***just*** the right level of preparation & commitment for you.
- Hosting an on-farm apprentice or intern. >> Requires ***substantial*** thought & preparation, plus organization, communication skills, patience, & time commitment.

... & in between. It's up to you!

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TYPES OF MENTORING OPPORTUNITIES

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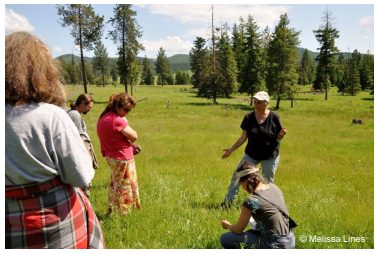
For a mentoring experience to work for *you & your learners* . . .



- Consider preparation required for that experience.
- Are you willing to invest the time & effort to make it a successful experience?

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TYPES OF MENTORING

- ✓ Interns/Apprentices
- ✓ Students
- ✓ On-Farm Intensive/Farm Immersion
- ✓ Farmer-to-Farmer
- ✓ Workshop
- ✓ Collaborative
- ✓ Farm Tour/ Farm Walk

Interns/Apprentices

Major elements of preparation for success:

- ✓ Set goals for this mentoring, based on learner's experience & goals & your skills & availability.
- ✓ Develop a program of study/work to meet goals. Create or find written materials to support learning.
- ✓ Investigate legal/insurance issues.
- ✓ Prepare Learner Agreement you both sign, to define details such as: Length of program, days/hours, material to be presented, expectations for both parties, hands-on work experience included, housing if applicable, meals, privacy, parking, laundry, WiFi, visitors, evaluations, cost or compensation if applicable, special requests.

Types of Mentoring

- **Interns/Apprentices**
  You enter into an agreement with the learner to study & work on your farm, for a specified period of time, usually all or part of a growing season.

Types of Mentoring

- **Students**
  College students may want to participate in internships that earn them college credit for on-farm research or education.

Types of Mentoring

- **On-Farm Intensive & Farm Immersion**
  The farmer mentor makes their farm available to learners for a focused, short-term learning experience. Often multiple days.

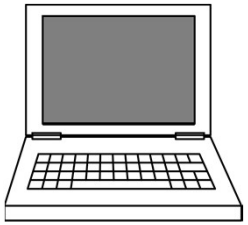
Types of Mentoring
Farmer-to-Farmer

- **Consulting short-term OR long-term**
  You agree to work with the learner on pre-arranged topics for a short or long period of time.

Types of Mentoring

- **Farmer-to-Farmer Mentoring**
  You establish a one-on-one mentoring or consulting relationship with another, usually less experienced, farmer *(may or may not live within driving distance of your farm).*

Types of Mentoring
Farmer-to-Farmer



- **Email or Telephone Consulting**
  You agree to one-on-one contact for specific questions using electronic means such as email or telephone.

Types of Mentoring

Farmer-to-Farmer

- **On-site evaluation of learner's farm**

✓ You might evaluate a parcel of land before the learner makes a land purchase or signs a lease.

✓ Or, perhaps you come to the learner's farm to provide advice to offer suggestions on how to best utilize the property & resources.

Types of Mentoring

- **Hands-On Workshop**
  Provide a group of learners firsthand experience with one particular process, w/live demonstration & participation.

Types of Mentoring

- **Workshop**

✓ Might be a full or half day educational event, on or off the farm, or could be a series of workshops.

✓ Develop your own workshop.

✓ Speak at a workshop organized by someone else.

Great Starter Mentoring Opportunity!

Types of Mentoring

- **Collaborative Mentoring**
  Work with a group of other farmers, educators, University Extension, or personnel from agencies such as NRCS, to offer learners a wide range of expertise, resources and information...in one or more events.

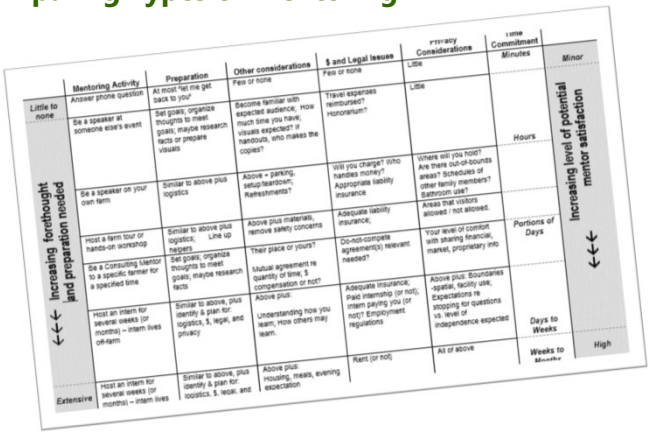
Types of Mentoring

- **Farm Tour/Farm Walk**

✓ Lower prep time.
✓ Excellent opportunity to showcase your farm to the general public.
✓ Valuable mentoring for fellow farmers.

Great Starter Mentoring Opportunity!

Comparing Types of Mentoring



Mentoring Activity	Preparation	Other considerations	$ and Legal issues	Privacy Considerations	Time Commitment
Answer phone question	At most "let me get back to you"	Fees or none	Fees or none	Little	Minutes
Be a speaker at someone else's event	Set goals; organize thoughts to meet goals; maybe research facts or prepare visuals	Become familiar with expected audience; How much time you have; visuals expected? If handouts, who makes the copies?	Travel expenses reimbursed? Honorarium?	Little	Hours
Be a speaker on your own farm	Similar to above plus logistics	Above + parking, setup/teardown; Refreshments?	Will you charge? Who handles money? Appropriate liability insurance	Where will you host? Are there out-of-bounds areas? Schedules of other family members? Bathroom use?	
Host a farm tour or hands-on workshop	Similar to above plus logistics; Line up helpers	Above plus materials, remove safety concerns	Adequate liability insurance;	Areas that visitors allowed / not allowed.	Portions of Days
Be a Consulting Mentor to a specific farmer for a specified time	Set goals; organize thoughts to meet goals; maybe research facts	Their place or yours? Mutual agreement re quantity of time; $ compensation or not?	Do-not-compete agreement(s) relevant, needed?	Your level of comfort with sharing financial, market, proprietary info	
Host an intern for several weeks (or months) – intern lives off-farm	Similar to above, plus identify & plan for logistics, $, legal, and privacy	Above plus: Understanding how you learn, How others may learn.	Adequate insurance; Paid internship (or not); intern paying you (or not)? Employment regulations	Above plus: Boundaries -spatial, facility use; Expectations re stopping for questions vs. level of independence expected	Days to Weeks
Host an intern for several weeks (or months) – intern lives	Similar to above, plus identify & plan for logistics, $, legal, and	Above plus: Housing, meals, evening expectation	Rent (or not)	All of above	Weeks to Months

Increasing level of potential mentor satisfaction: Minor → High
Increasing forethought and preparation needed: Little to none → Extensive

Types of Mentoring
Farm Tour/Farm Walk

Preparation:

✓ Plan content & length of tour.
✓ Logistics - parking, restrooms, water, boot wash, pets, children, attire, etc.
✓ Off-limits areas.
✓ Police tour area for possible risks (pick up hoses).
✓ Prepare handout.
✓ Marketing of tour.

BECOMING A FARMER MENTOR
Where to Start?

- Sign up for the "Cultivating Success Farmer-Mentor Training." Learn how to create your own successful mentoring program: Developing Your Farm Education Plan, Adult Learning Styles, Writing Learner Agreements, & much more.
- Contact your local Extension office, explain your desire to begin mentoring other farmers. Offer your expertise (& possibly your farm) for one of their programs.
- Start Small & gain experience!
  - Speak at someone else's event (*see Extension office above*).
  - Organize a short event at your farm, such as a farm walk.
  - Move up to a one-day event at your farm, such as a workshop.
  - Combine these teaching experiences to develop a full-scale apprenticeship.

Your Small Farm

2018 Webinar Series

Join our **new**, *free*, week-night webinar series designed to help you strengthen and expand your farming business! Pick the webinars that suit your interests. Webinars are scheduled for weeknights from 6 PM – 7:30 PM MST/7 PM – 8:30 PM PST from February – April 2018.

To view the full schedule and register visit:
www.cultivatingsuccess.org/2018webinarseries

Land Access
Colette DePhelps, Community Food Systems Area Educator, University of Idaho Extension, Northern District and Marci Miller, Education Director of Rural Roots, Inc.
Recorded on Monday, February 12, 2018.
Watch the Recorded Webinar

Cover Crops for Idaho Small Farms
Lauren Golden, Agriculture Educator, University of Idaho Extension, Blaine Co.
Recorded on February 20, 2018.
Watch the Recorded Webinar

Farmer Mentor Training - An Introduction
Diane Green, Greentree Naturals, Sandpoint, ID
Melissa Lines, SkyLines Farm, Harvard, ID
Colette DePhelps, Community Food Systems Area Educator, University of Idaho Extension, Northern District
Monday, March 5th, 2018 from 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM PST/7:00 PM - 8:30 PM MST

Selling to Retail Grocers and Restaurants in Idaho
Colette DePhelps, Community Food Systems Area Educator, University of Idaho Extension, Northern District
Monday, March 12th, 2018 from 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM PST/7:00 PM - 8:30 PM MST

Introduction to Idaho Farm Link
Colette DePhelps, Community Food Systems Area Educator, University of Idaho Extension, Northern District
Eileen Stachowski, Small Farms Program Coordinator, University of Idaho Extension, Ada Co.
Monday, March 19th, 2018 from 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM PST/7:00 PM - 8:30 PM MST

Join us for our upcoming webinars!

Next webinar:

Selling to Retail Grocers and Restaurants in Idaho
Monday, March 12th
6:00-7:30pm PST/7:00-8:30pm MST

Colette DePhelps
University of Idaho Extension
Northern District

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Additional Farmer Mentor Resources

New England Small Farm Institute
The On-Farm Mentor's Guide
On-Farm Mentoring Decision Making Workbook
http://www.smallfarm.org/main/for_on_farm_mentors/

Cultivating Success™ Farmer Mentor Toolkit
http://cultivatingsuccess.wsu.edu/farmer-mentor-program/farmer-mentor-toolkit/

** Coming Fall 2018**
Cultivating the Success™ of Beginning Farmers: Farmer Mentor Handbook
www.cultivatingsuccess.org

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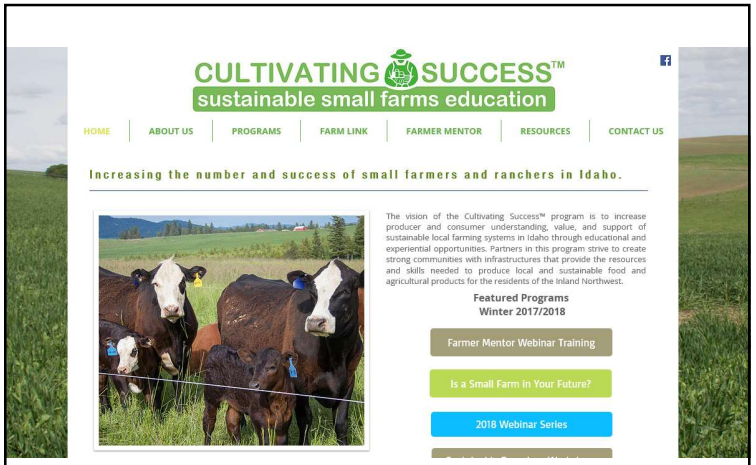

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Please take our post-webinar survey!

Questions?
Contact me anytime!

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