

Spiral Farm

Production Plan

Note: See Crop Plan in Appendix 1 for a sample 50-share crop plan, including seeding and transplanting schedules.

I will grow a diverse array of vegetables and herbs (30+) for both the market and CSA customers. I will start seedlings in a lighted grow room or a greenhouse (yet to be determined, depending on what the land I find has to offer), seeding by hand into plastic trays (standard 1020 trays with plugs of various sizes depending on the crop) filled with potting mix and compost. I will use the crop plan in Appendix 1 as my seeding schedule.

I will transplant seedlings by hand according to the crop plan in Appendix 1 to keep track of planting dates and also expected harvest dates. I will direct seed certain crops as needed with a hand seeder (either Earthway or a 4-row pinpoint seeder depending on the crop), also using the plan in Appendix 1. I will undersow some crops with clover and other cover crops to improve fertility and manage weeds. I will also add other soil amendments as needed and develop a cover crop plan that suits the land. I will use my own compost from the farm as much as possible.*

Since the farm is starting off small, I will use mainly hand tools and smaller machinery to work the soil, such as a walk-behind rototiller to prepare beds, as well as rakes, hoes, and shovels for weeding and other tasks. I may need a deeper till done in spring and/or fall; for this I will hire a neighbouring farmer who has a bigger tractor. I will also buy harvest bins and buckets as well as a garden cart for harvesting and transporting produce from the field to the wash station and storage facility. To help cover equipment costs, I will apply for grants such as the Farm Start seed grant, Heifer International, or Pollination Project grants.

For my wash station, I will install a shade-covered area outside the barn or shed which is in close proximity to a water supply. I will obtain bathtubs or comparably-sized basins in which to wash and cool greens and other vegetables, and will build mesh tables (using hardware cloth and lumber) on which to drain and bunch vegetables. I will obtain wooden skids from a nearby warehouse to stand on and to store bins of harvested produce. I will attempt to install a wash station water collection system in order to reuse the water for irrigation. This would likely be in the form of draining wash station water into a basin or rain barrel to which a hose is attached for watering crops.

For storage, unless the land I use has an existing cooler, I plan to either build a small room in the barn or basement using plywood and insulation (straw or foam), or convert a small trailer or existing room into a cooler, in both cases by installing a Cool Bot to maintain temperature. A nearby department store is closing and I will also investigate the possibility of buying a pop cooler or similar fridge from them. I will use harvest bins to store harvested crops in the cooler. I will transport harvested crops to market and CSA pickup using camping coolers and ice packs.

To harvest, I will also use mainly hand tools, such as knives, buckets, crates and a cart. I will observe each crop to determine when to harvest, as well as use the crop plan in Appendix 1 to estimate their approximate date(s) of harvest and make up for any crop failures. I will weigh or count harvested crops to determine the CSA and market allotments and also to keep records of yields and sales. I will obtain some weigh scales for use at harvest time as well as for CSA pickups.

I will irrigate my crops as needed using either overhead watering (sprinkler) or a soaker hose depending on the crop; I may test out a gravity-driven drip line such as those made by TyVek as well. I will hand-water seedlings in trays with a hose and wand. I will look into rainwater collection as an alternative source of water to reduce the pressure on the well.

I will use minimal packaging for the market and CSA. I will purchase some bags for pre-washed salad mix at market, as well as some quart and pint baskets to display smaller crops like peas or berries.

*If the land I use has fertility issues I cannot fix in the short-term through cover crops and plant or mineral amendments, I am also in touch with a local animal sanctuary who has offered to provide me with their composted manure. In this case I could not claim that the farm is totally veganic, but in keeping with the vision and mission statement, I would be using the most responsibly sourced manure compost available to me, and would be glad to make my customers aware of this.