

MY APPRENTICE BLURBS by Colleen Prentice

You're gonna work hard as an apprentice at Hope Seeds but let me tell ya, it's gonna be worth it and there are some definite perks. You'll be working with the award winning Andrea Berry, owner and grower, highly sought out by the media, representative of ACORN and certified organic inspector. This woman has connections ya'll. And yet she is totally approachable, funny and down to earth. Seeds are her thing though and as one of the very few organic seed farms in Atlantic Canada, you'll be getting a seed saving experience that you wouldn't be getting at other farms.

I was one of two apprentices at Hope Seeds from May to October in 2009. I wanted to get exposure to growing many types of vegetables and I got it. That year we grew close to 50 different kinds of crops.

Some of these were quite rare which is exciting enough but check out these stats. We grew:

- 10 different greens varieties
- 10 different onion varieties
- 10 different carrot varieties
- 11 different lettuce varieties
- 11 different pea varieties
- 12 different potatoe varieties
- 13 different pepper varieties
- 13 different cucumber varieties
- 20 different bean varieties
- and more than 30 different squash, tomatoe and garlic varieties and much more.

So obviously there was a lot of on-farm learning but there was an amazing amount of off-farm learning going on too. Andrea took us everywhere; to the Common Ground Fair in Maine, to workshops and tours at other farms, we worked at the Florenceville-Bristol farmers market one day a week for many weeks, we went to the Fall Fair and the Free School at nearby Falls Brook Centre, and we won 1st place in the Glassville parade for our float on the walk behind tractor and cart. Learning can be fun too.

2009 was a year of expansion at the farm and preceding years will no doubt be as well. It was this year that the big field at the top of the hill was cleared and sown with buckwheat in preparation for many new plots of the future. Also, Andrea started selling her produce to some local restaurants and the food coop in the area on a weekly basis. Because not only are seed crops grown on this farm, but what's called trial crops are as well, to see if they are worthy of becoming seed crops. That means lots of extra produce and could lead to many opportunities for business in the years to come. But whatever vegetables aren't sold are stored in the root cellar or preserved in the kitchen or eaten by you. And you get to be a part of it all.

I am so happy with the knowledge I have gained at Hope Seeds. But just as importantly, I learned what good food should be like and about the good people that produce it. These two extra tidbits were the most valuable lessons for me to take home. The farmers behind the food we eat or the seeds we grow are people that deserve immense respect in our society. The food that I grow and eat from now on will have meaning and will always be judged by me on the standard of those months I spent

at Hope Seeds. I can't wait to further explore all these things for the rest of my life.

I ALSO HAD STARTED PUTTING THIS TOGETHER MONTHS EARLIER:

Things you're going to learn at Hope Seeds:

- you're going to have fun in a community that is unique (wacky Andrea, Glassville events like the chance to be in a parade and keep up the tradition of winning first prize for the best float, being a bike ride away from wind turbines/kite festivals/solar power/strawbale houses, participating in the free school at Falls Brook Center/local yoga classes/organic farming workshops in Maine)

- you're going to be surrounded by both domesticated animals and wildlife that you will appreciate (dogs, cats, cows, moose, fireflies, swallows, cedar waxwings, bears, skunks, woodpeckers)

- come mid-July you are going to harvest more vegetables than you ever have before (pizzas with beet greens, rosemary, parsley, celery leaves, celery, broccoli, asparagus, spinach)

- you're going to learn skills that you can impress all your friends with (putting up pea fences, separating the chaf from buckwheat seed, broadcasting buckwheat seed, growing mushrooms on logs, cooking on a stove run on wood, preserving food that's stored in an actual root cellar, operating a walk behind tractor, )

- you're going to eat great food that will change you're eating habits forever and get to sample trials of vegetable varieties that you would possibly not be able to eat anywhere else in the world (granola, pancakes, oatmeal, cookies at tea time, shepherd's pie, baked beans, homemade bread, toast at lunch, passamaquody potatoes, fiddleheads, maple syrup from the trees outside)

- you're going to be contributing to an unusual and pioneering business, in organic seed production, before everyone else gets into it and help it in it's expansion