



A place. An experience.
A way forward for all ages.

The Mountain Retreat and Learning Center

Farm Manager

Job Description

About The Mountain

The Mountain is an ecologically conscious retreat and learning center perched on a dramatic granite outcropping high above the beautiful Nantahala National Forest in Highlands, North Carolina. We celebrate Unitarian Universalist principles and welcome all of those who share our mission to create meaningful connections and make a difference in our world.

We offer private and group retreats, beautiful meeting spaces, engaging workshops, delicious meals, and opportunities for outdoor recreation and learning. We also host a variety of seasonal youth programs and residential camps each summer. Our campus includes a lodge with sweeping mountain views, cabins and bunkhouses, a lake, an extensive network of trails, an old growth forest, and a farm.

Our Mission

The Mountain enriches lives, fosters an appreciation of the natural world, honors the interconnectedness of all things, and inspires people to build inclusive, meaningful, sustainable communities throughout their lives.

Our Vision

An exemplary retreat, camp, and learning center that celebrates Unitarian Universalist principles, inspires people of all ages, transforms lives, and builds a more compassionate world.

About Many Hands Peace Farm



Many Hands Peace Farm is a two acre farm and food forest that supports the Mission of The Mountain Retreat and Learning Center. By providing educational opportunities for guests, growing food for our community, and conscientiously stewarding the natural world around us, Many Hands Peace Farm seeks to inspire people of all ages, transform lives, and build a more compassionate, connected world.

Located at the entrance to our campus on sunny, open land, Many Hands Peace Farm consists of multiple field plots with rich soil, a small propagation greenhouse, a hoophouse for season extension, a composting area, a young food forest, abundant native and perennial landscaping, and a historic stable building used for poultry and tool storage. We farm with respect for the interdependent web of life, using regenerative farming techniques and permaculture principles, such as limited tillage, cover cropping, integrated pest management, composting, and mulching. Many Hands Peace Farm aims to preserve the health of the soil, water, and diverse ecosystems on our site in the Southern Appalachian Mountains.

Summary of Key Duties

The Farm Manager will be a part of The Mountain's leadership team as we continue to develop the farm and its educational programs to further our Mission.

The Farm Manager will manage and execute duties associated with the day-to-day and long-term operation of our farm. This includes the appearance and upkeep of the farm fields, food forest, historic stable building, greenhouse, hoop house, and poultry. They will supervise employees, manage volunteers, oversee farm budgets, and contribute to strategic planning efforts. Because programs and education are a large part of our Mission and values at The Mountain, the Farm Manager will integrate, develop and deliver educational activities based on sustainable food systems and regenerative agriculture practices. In order to successfully execute this scope of work, the Farm Manager will collaborate across various departments, including Kitchen, Facilities, Youth and Adult Programs, and Guest Services.

Core Responsibilities

- **Production:** Grow food for our community
- **Education:** Design, host, and manage educational events and opportunities at MHPF
- **Environmental Stewardship:** Apply regenerative agriculture and permaculture principles to care for the land and enhance the food forest
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Job Responsibilities

Grow Food for Our Community

- **Crop Planning and Selection:** Create and implement a crop plan to consistently contribute high value food to the Mountain's kitchen. Coordinate with the Kitchen Manager to develop a plan to best integrate produce, herbs, eggs, and other products. Research and consult with other local growers to determine which crops will yield best results and add the most value to meals served in the Dining Hall at The Mountain. Select appropriate seed varieties for optimal growth and timing of harvest with regard to MHPF's unique site and climate zone.
- **Land Preparation and Site Care:** Prepare the soil by utilizing mindful tillage, mulching and composting. Utilize cover cropping, crop rotation and companion planting practices to maximize crop and soil health. Strive to uphold MHPF's commitment to refrain from using synthetic inputs. Oversee site infrastructure, development, and management, including on-site maintenance, safety, cleanliness, and organization of materials.
- **Planting and Cultivation:** Grow a variety of annual vegetables, fruits, flowers, and herbs by sowing seeds directly in the ground or starting seedlings in the greenhouse. Transplant seedlings to the farm in appropriate locations. Engage in regular weeding and integrated pest management practices to ensure plant health. Build and maintain smart irrigation systems and sustainable watering practices.
- **Harvesting and Post-Harvest Handling:** Identify the optimal harvest time for each crop with consideration for The Mountain's kitchen meal plan. Oversee careful harvesting of produce to maintain quality. Oversee proper cleaning, sorting, packaging and storage of harvested crops with attention to food safety. Learn GAP (Good Agricultural Practices) best practices for safe food handling and design systems to ensure long-term safety at MHPF.
- **Record Keeping and Analysis:** Record crop yields, harvests, and production costs. Track value of produce and other items contributed to The Mountain's kitchen.

Educational Events and Opportunities at Many Hands Peace Farm

- Plan and implement new and existing farm education programs, tours, and events; including youth programs for MountainCamp and Youth Conferences.
- Deliver workshops, tours, and presentations on topics such as environmental stewardship and sustainable food systems. Plan logistics for workshops and events with guest speakers.

- Mentor farm staff (and other Mountain Staff, as relevant) to also conduct educational tours, workshops and presentations.
- Work with Kitchen Manager and Youth/Adult Programs Managers to develop new initiatives and programs focused on building food security, understanding nutrition and promoting environmental sustainability.
- Develop educational activities, resources, and other materials with attention to broader curriculum development over time.
- Contribute to written newsletters and blogs, collaborating with the Marketing department as needed.
- Network with local and extended communities to build professional partnerships that promote The Mountain and its Mission.
- Work with the Development/Advancement team to execute current grants, explore additional grant opportunities, and secure other revenue sources.

Environmental Stewardship

- Maintain and enhance the food forest such that it is beautiful, bountiful and welcoming for visitors. Ensure a safe and inclusive environment to foster learning within the Food Forest.
- Oversee plant health, introduce new plants, and design new projects within the Food Forest. Study, learn and implement best practices for caring for the plant guilds that have been installed based on permaculture principles.
- Develop a comprehensive document cataloging and mapping the contents of the MHPF food forest.
- Maintain and enhance signage in and around the Food Forest and other Farm sites.
- Recommend enhancements to the food forest, with support from outside experts as needed. Work with the Development/Advancement team to fundraise for future installments.

In addition to these Core Responsibilities, the Farm Manager will also be responsible for:

Staff Management

- Supervise and mentor farm staff, apprentices or interns, and volunteers.
- Recruit, train, and mentor new staff as needed.
- Ensure that all staff adhere to health and safety regulations.
- Post staff schedules, assuring appropriate staffing and adhering to approved staffing budgets.

Marketing and Development

- Collaborate with Guest Services and Marketing staff to advertise and promote farm programs.
- Supply Marketing staff with content to be used for Mountain email newsletters and social media platforms.

Planning and Budgets

- Analyze existing operations, crops, poultry and overall finances to make recommendations.
- Manage annual budget and strategic development of the farm.
- Collaborate with leadership to prepare annual budgets and regular financial reports.
- Oversee financial costs associated with infrastructure and site improvements.
- Manage costs associated with the maintenance, safety, cleanliness and organization of materials used on the farm. Track inventory and expenses associated with all materials.

Serve as a member of The Mountain's Leadership Team

- Strive to be a role model for all staff and a team player.
- Cultivate kind, professional relationships with all who interact with the MHPF.
- Initiate and respond promptly to virtual and in-person communications when on-duty. Monitor communications and requests when off-duty as needed.
- Serve as an engaged and positive member of The Mountain community. Participate in staff meetings.
- Promptly respond to informational inquiries from The Mountain's Board of Trustees and other Stakeholders, and attend Board meetings when invited.

- Perform other job-related duties as assigned.

Qualifications

- College degree and/or 2+ years of demonstrated experience in the field(s) of agriculture, permaculture, agroecology and/or environmental education.
- Knowledge of horticulture, with an extensive understanding of plant biology, growing conditions, and different vegetable varieties.
- Experience with annual and perennial food crops in production and educational settings. Experience in designing, planning, or maintaining food forests or similar permaculture projects is a plus.
- Ability to perform demanding physical labor outdoors in various weather conditions.
- Self-motivated, with the ability to coordinate several projects simultaneously. Demonstrated organizational and time management skills. Strength in project management and delegation.
- Attention to detail, with ability to precisely monitor crop health and identify potential issues.
- Adaptable, with the ability to be flexible and adjust to changing weather conditions or demands.
- Previous experience with non-profits is a plus.
- Valid driver's license. Ability to drive a manual transmission is a plus.
- Must have familiarity with hand tools and safe use of basic power tools. Experience with a BCS walk behind tiller and/or larger tractors is a plus.
- Experience in supervision of youth, adults, and/or volunteers.
- Ability to foster a cooperative, team-oriented work environment.
- Excellent communication skills with people of all ages, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
- Ability to work flexible, at times intensive hours, including evenings, weekends and holidays as needed. Balancing the demands of the job with personal health and wellness is essential.
- Understanding of Unitarian Universalist values (which inform The Mountain's mission, and are shared by congregations that support The Mountain and receive support through their relationships to us); knowledge of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) and the UUA Southern Region is a plus.

Additional Details

Reports to: Executive Director

Supervises: Farm Staff, Farm Apprentices or Interns, and Volunteers

Collaborates with: Kitchen, Maintenance/Facilities, Guest Services, Youth and Adult Programs, Development/Advancement and Marketing Staff

Hours of work: This position will require the employee to be on-site and available in-person on a regular basis, working 35-40+ hours/week. Employee must be available to support all in-person educational programming. Weekly schedules will reflect the needs of activities and guest groups at The Mountain. Occasional weekends and longer hours may be required during our busy summer season.

Compensation and Benefits

Compensation: \$48,000 total (\$36,000 salary + \$12,000 benefits)

Benefits: On-site housing and meals (when the kitchen is operating) provided at no cost; Use of recreational facilities such as lake and hiking trails; Health Insurance, Dental Insurance, and 3% SIMPLE IRA retirement matching.

Job Performance and Accountability: New hires must read the Employee Handbook and sign off on an understanding and acceptance of all policies and procedures. Upon commencement of employment, new hires will work under a 90-day adjustment period. The suitability of the employee to the job and their fit with the community standards will be carefully assessed. This is a critical period for the employee to determine their own comfort level with the job and The Mountain. After this period, upon mutual agreement, the employee will convert to regular status and begin accruing paid time-off. A formal, annual performance review will be conducted by the employee's supervisor.

AAP/EEO Statement: The Mountain Retreat and Learning Center is an Equal Opportunity Employer and is committed to the full inclusion of all.

Application Process

To apply, please visit <https://www.themountainrlc.org/jobs/> to submit your resume and three references. Cover letters are encouraged but not required. All qualified applicants will be asked to complete a background check as a part of our legal requirement to work with youth on campus. Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis until a suitable candidate is found.