

Ecology Action's
GROW BIOINTENSIVE®
9-Week Summer Course Series

Information Booklet

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Summary

Despite technological advances in agriculture there are still more than 1 billion malnourished people in the world.¹ Rising food prices have led to political unrest in many countries.² 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 deplete farmable soil - our most important finite resource. 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 access³."

Aware of the intensifying world challenges and the basic need of people to feed themselves, Ecology Action has been working since 1972 to develop an elegant, small-scale, truly sustainable agricultural system. This system, known as GROW BIOINTENSIVE, is a high-yielding agricultural method that emphasizes local food production (based historically on intensive food raising systems) while building and regenerating the soil that feeds us. Ecology Action has a network of affiliate organizations and internship graduates working around the world to enable people to promote good health and sustainable food security.

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, time, 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 are looking to enjoy a lifestyle of *simple living* with a focus on wholistic health and sustainability.

Ecology Action offers a 9-Week Summer Course Series where qualified participants who want to be GROW BIOINTENSIVE resources for their communities can get involved in hands-on demonstration, teaching and research in sustainable agriculture and closed-system food production. The program focuses on the GROW BIOINTENSIVE Sustainable Mini-Farming technique and the low-technology lifestyle appropriate to development work. This series begins August 12rd and ends October 17th.

Program Information

Ecology Action's summer teaching program returns with a 9-Part Course Series running from August 12th through October 17th 2017 from 9AM to 3PM each Saturday.

Ecology Action offers this 9-Part Summer Course Series for individuals wishing to learn more about designing a complete diet and planning a sustainable vegetable garden or mini-farm using biointensive techniques. During the course you will learn the eight principles of biointensive gardening that will increase your yields, grow your soil and conserve resources for the whole planet.

Participants will meet from 9:00AM- 3:00PM each Saturday starting August 12th and finishing October 7th 2017. The course will rotate between our three educational mini-farm sites in Mendocino County, Northern California. Over the course of the program, you will design a complete diet that you can grow in your own backyard and will walk away with a complete garden plan to get you started on your way! You will also learn gardening techniques which will increase your yields and conserve resources.

This 9-Part Summer Course Series is of particular benefit to those who have already participated in an Ecology Action 3-Day Workshop, or those who are looking to learn more about the basic procedures of biologically intensive food production. The main focus will be developing a complete diet design and garden plan for growing all of your own grains, vegetables and compost materials. The program is a combination of:

- Lecture and demonstrations,
- Study,
- Field work, and
- Guided Practice

This combination is designed is so that participants learn Ecology Action's processes both theoretically and practically, and can understand the processes that are involved in starting this type of work (GROW BIOINTENSIVE farming, low-tech living, teaching the method to others) as well as doing it over the long-term. The Summer Course Series is an opportunity to assist Ecology Action in accomplishing its mission, with both direct and indirect learning occurring in the process.

During the 9-week program, emphasis is placed on the ability of the participants to learn to farm/garden and develop GROW BIOINTENSIVE approaches, in the belief that the most creativity and strength come from people joining forces and working as a team after they have fully developed strength and independence. We have found that skill levels can be dramatically upgraded with this type of training.

Ecology Action's research, demonstration and education mini-farm garden sites, while beautiful and enjoyable to work in, are first and foremost research gardens where a multitude of experiments are run concurrently. The research focus is on using the GROW BIOINTENSIVE method to conduct scientific tests and collect data to provide solutions to the challenge of creating and maintaining sustainable soil fertility and conserving resources on a closed-system basis, while living a sustainable life. Participants will use their time in these garden sites to learn to use a highly productive and regenerative garden/mini-farming system. The techniques taught will be a closed system, soil building, organic approach to food production. In addition participants will learn about positive social solutions to food insecurity.

For more information on Ecology Action's longer internships, you can download and read the Internship Information Booklet created for the 6-month Internship, which will give you an idea of the range of topics that will be covered. For those interested in a more extended program, a 3-year apprenticeship is also available (click here for more information).

Schedule and Routine

Class days will begin at 9AM and end at 3PM and will involve both garden learning and classroom work, lectures, discussions, and multimedia covering a range of topics. Participants will have readings and homework to complete each week. The weekly readings and homework will pertain to the practical and conceptual aspects of GROW BIOINTENSIVE and food security issues around the world. The experience is demanding but rewarding to those willing to engage themselves.

Please 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 the WWOOF or ATTRA websites. Also, we appreciate that people who are interested in sustainable agriculture are interested in exploring other methods. Please note though, that this program will focus exclusively on the GROW BIOINTENSIVE method. For more information about this method you may visit:

http://www.growbiointensive.org/grow_main.html

Curriculum

Over 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

Participants will have several books and publications that they will use for readings and design projects. By the end of the program participants 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.

Program Expenses

Cost for a 9-Part Course Series at Ecology Action, 2017 (non-refundable)

Item	Cost
Tuition and Administration	US\$750
Room	participants provide their own housing
Food	\$50
Publications	\$50
Medical Insurance	participants provide their own insurance
Transportation	participants provide their own transportation
TOTAL Due (Payable to Ecology Action, non-refundable):	\$850

Note: A \$250 deposit is due within one week of acceptance.

NOTE: Not included in the expenses is personal travel to and from the program site, which will vary per participant, medical insurance, and money for incidental expenses or entertainment over the course of the program. All participants are responsible for providing for these items.

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.

Victory Gardens for Peace (Mendocino, CA)

The Victory Gardens for Peace 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 and classes are unique and offer a great experience in water conservation, soil fertility management and food raising through the GROW BIOINTENSIVE method.

Follow-Up Activities

One of the unique aspects of this program is that we will allow you time throughout the summer to plan your next steps after you complete the course. It is expected that graduates of the 9-Week Course Series 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 program, 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 program, please fill out our secure online application, which you can find at <http://www.growbiointensive.org/9WeekCourse>. Applications will be accepted through August 5, 2017. Candidates will receive notice of acceptance no later than August 5, 2017. If you have any questions, please email 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 program?

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: _____