

ECOLOGY ACTION'S  
GROW BIOINTENSIVE®  
SUSTAINABLE MINI-FARMING  
INTERNSHIP PROGRAM



INFORMATION BOOKLET



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## SUMMARY

*This program enables participants to become proficient at an intermediate to advanced level for GROW BIOINTENSIVE teaching in key projects and national programs globally.*

Ecology Action has several openings for interns to assist in hands-on research in sustainable agriculture and closed-system food production using the GROW BIOINTENSIVE Sustainable Mini-Farming technique.

There are three research garden sites to which can interns apply; however, placement at individual sites is at the discretion of Ecology Action.

The sites are:

- Ecology Action's Common Ground Mini-Farm,
  - The Golden Rule Research Garden, and
- The Stanford Inn by the Sea Research Garden.

There are 6 and 12 month internships available, as well as an extended three year apprenticeship program; commitment to the program is required for the entire internship period. Interns live on-site at the research garden location.

Applicants should note that this is an unpaid, fee-based internship, and that the program involves hard work and rustic living conditions. However, interns will find that the long-term benefits they harvest are of great value!

Application deadline for the internships: September 15 each year  
(but earlier submission is preferred).



# THE SITES

## **THE COMMON GROUND MINI-FARM, WILLITS, CA**

This is the location of Ecology Action's Headquarters, and is our most established research garden, started in 1985. 1.25-acre garden where interns work and learn is located in a rural mountain environment outside the small town of Willits, CA. The garden consists of approximately 110 GROW BIOINTENSIVE garden beds and is watered from a gravity-fed spring. Interns are housed in a yurt and rustic cabins, with shared bedrooms and a common area, including a kitchen where communal meals are prepared and eaten. Most of the site is "off-grid", fueled by solar power; however, some buildings do not have electrical power. A composting privy and a solar shower comprise the bathroom facilities. This site would be challenging for an intern who does not like to live close to the earth, but the work is interesting and rewarding, and the surroundings are beautiful. A small staff and John Jeavons' family live on site year-round; interns arrive from around the world periodically.

## **THE RESEARCH GARDEN AT THE GOLDEN RULE RANCH, WILLITS, CA**

The Golden Rule Ranch, once home to the racehorse Seabiscuit, is now owned by Christ's Church of the Golden Rule, and has been home to Ecology Action's second research garden for the past 10 years. Also located outside of Willits, near the Ecology Action Headquarters site, the Golden Rule site is located in a valley, which provides less challenging growing conditions than the Mini-Farm, allowing interns the important experience of growing in different climates and conditions. The research garden consists of approximately 140 GROW BIOINTENSIVE beds, and a large greenhouse. Interns live on-site in shared housing, which, while rustic, is more developed than that at the Headquarters site. Electrical power is "on the grid", and bathroom facilities are indoors.

## **NEW IN 2010!! THE RESEARCH GARDEN AT STANFORD INN BY THE SEA, MENDOCINO, CA**

Our newest research garden is at Stanford Inn by the Sea. Stanford is an Eco-Inn located on a coastal hillside meadow overlooking Mendocino Bay near the small town of Mendocino. The Inn has converted its entire ten acres to sustainable and organic gardening and landscaping. In a partnership with Ecology Action, Stanford Inn has provided the facilities for the research garden, currently consisting of about 40 beds which interns established in the 2010 internship program. This site provides the experience of working and learning to grow sustainably in a coastal setting. Interns are housed a small quarters and trailer on-site, provided by the Inn. The facilities are modest, but are more modern than the Headquarters site, with electrical power and indoor bathrooms.



# THE PROGRAM

6- and 12-month internships are available in GROW BIOINTENSIVE sustainable mini-farming research and the low-technology lifestyle appropriate to development work. Internships begin in mid-April of each year. An extended 3 year apprenticeship is also available. For more information, please see the Apprenticeship materials online at [www.growbiointensive.org](http://www.growbiointensive.org).

Ecology Action's 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 on a closed-system basis, while living a sustainable life. Interns have an opportunity to learn valuable techniques and information, to experience an alternative living style, to make lifelong ties with other interns from different states and countries, and to assist Ecology Action in accomplishing work that can help farmers, gardeners, and communities around the world to raise food, conserve resources and build fertile soil, sustainably.

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, 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 have an adventurous, hardy nature and can make a dedicated commitment to the program and its unusual living conditions for the duration of the internship.

Originally limited to a 3-year apprenticeship, our teaching course has expanded to accommodate increased interest in the program to include 6 in the summer and 12-month internships. These internships are intended for people who already have an established understanding of the GROW BIOINTENSIVE method, and want to take their skills to the next level.

Specifically, we have developed these internships for people who:

- Have already taken a workshop or other course in the GROW BIOINTENSIVE method, or are involved in established projects and programs that use the method;
- Are interested in an in-depth understanding and experience of why GROW BIOINTENSIVE works and how to modify it for other climates, soils and cultures; and
- Expect to be actively involved in public service in this kind of work (with selective preference given to those who have a strong interest in applied sustainable farming and/or demonstrate a significant ability to use the skills they gain through an internship to benefit their communities and the planet).

The internship is a combination of:

- Lecture and demonstrations,
- Study,
- Garden work, and
- Living the method.

This combination is designed 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 internships are an opportunity to assist Ecology Action in accomplishing its work, with both direct and indirect learning occurring in the process.

During the internship, emphasis is placed on the ability of the intern to learn to farm and develop GROW BIOINTENSIVE designs and 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.

Interns are generally free of administrative responsibilities during the program, and are able to focus on learning through reading, classes, and work in the research garden. Time is available for an independent study project, and there are periodic meetings with an Ecology Action staff member. There are also weekly meetings with staff and other interns to discuss progress in the research mini-farm garden. The Interns will take part in seasonal courses and workshops. Depending on the work done and the level of involvement demonstrated by the intern, it is possible that the internship can lead to an Ecology Action certification as a GROW BIOINTENSIVE teacher.



## THE LEARNING PROCESS

We have found that, after an initial acclimatization period for interns at Ecology Action, usually a few weeks during which we get to really know you, it is easier to see how the new skills and information being taught can best be integrated with your life and work, and we can better help you plan for the future. As you progress through your internship, you will continue to realize the interconnections in the topics you are studying, and the real decisions about how to apply what you have been learning to your future can be made. The internship will build the study and work skills that will help you more easily identify and learn the things you still need to know. It will also give you a chance to study and research more fully the topics that are most important to you, and to formulate and answer your own questions.

As an intern, you can learn as much as you want to learn. Within the context of the program and your duties as a research assistant, what you do with your time at Ecology Action is really up to you, because we value independence and believe it is important to foster the creativity that is so important to successfully developing and teaching solutions to global farming challenges.

In addition to the structured learning that takes place through lectures and reading, interns will find that learning also takes place on a more subconscious level as you get a feel for the rhythms of the method. Through repetition of on-going farm duties and seeing the fundamental need for a garden's balance between carbon and calories as exhibited by what is being planted and harvested, a profound, almost involuntary learning occurs in interns that is often not realized until time has passed or until participants return to their communities and begin to teach others.

# CANDIDATES

Ecology Action admits workshop participants, interns and volunteers by selecting the most qualified candidates from around the world, and we give priority in the selection process to candidates from the most qualified projects and national programs that need strengthening. Particular priority will be given to those programs already emphasizing One-Bed Unit models, calorie/carbon crop growing, and complete multi-bed-unit systems, and to those individuals committed to making GROW BIOINTENSIVE Mini-Farming their life-time work. The program requires that interns be willing to devote at least two years following the internship to a GROW BIOINTENSIVE follow-up project or program.

The candidates that best fit the program will share Ecology Action's commitment to the GROW BIOINTENSIVE method of food-raising and to a simple life-style. They should be familiar with and have worked with Ecology Action publications, and they should be prepared to devote their attention to working within the parameters of the GROW BIOINTENSIVE method for the duration of the internship. Although we appreciate that people who are interested in sustainable agriculture may be interested in exploring other methods and tools, please note that this internship is focused exclusively on the GROW BIOINTENSIVE method, and that exploration of other methods and philosophies such as permaculture, rock dust/ remineralization, raw foods, etc., will not be possible during your internship with us.

The best candidate for this program will be experienced in GROW BIOINTENSIVE mini-farming. Their principal learning goals will be:

- To experience the particular temperate climate and soil of the research garden sites.
- To gain a deeper understanding of the GROW BIOINTENSIVE method and soil building principles and how they relate synergistically.
- To develop an understanding of how the GROW BIOINTENSIVE research, training and demonstration sites are run as a possible model for their own mini-farm and/or teaching program.

Internship candidates seeking answers to specific long-term goals related to a GROW BIOINTENSIVE project or program will be given preference in the admission process, because having a focus of this sort maximizes the benefit the intern receives through the program. Willingness to take appropriate initiative, assume responsibility and provide follow-through is a key characteristic for interns.

After completing this program, interns are expected to engage in GROW BIOINTENSIVE farming, teach GROW BIOINTENSIVE classes and send annual reports of their activities to Ecology Action for two years following their internship.



## SCHEDULE, ACCOMMODATIONS, FOOD

Simple accommodations are provided, as described above, with other needs provided for by the intern (see “Suggested Items ...” on p.8). Our commitment to simple living includes simple eating. Food is purchased through an Ecology Action coordinator who integrates intern food requests as best as possible. Interns prepare the meals on a rotation basis; meals range from vegetarian to vegan. Not all of our food is grown in the garden; some food is purchased at the Farmers’ Market and elsewhere. Normally, we are not able to accommodate fruitarian or other specialized diets. Cooking, dish-washing and other household responsibilities among the interns are shared.

All interns and members of the regular garden/mini-farm staff work Monday through Thursday. Work times vary but are generally from 9:00 a.m. to approximately 8:30+ p.m., with time off for lunch and dinner. The “week-end” consists of approximately 1-1/2 days off during the next three days (for example, Friday and 1/2 of Sunday; 1/2 of Friday and all of Saturday; and so on, with the pattern of days-off changing from week to week to ensure that all interns have equal opportunity for rest and socialization). When there are sufficient people in the program, there are two-day weekends off every other week. In addition two, 3-day weekends are scheduled for each intern: one before July and after August. Ecology Action’s staff is small and extremely busy, so weekend activities are determined by each intern. The internship program is intensive, and other than the designated days off and pre-arranged vacation, time is not available for extracurricular sight-seeing, travel or farm visits.



### SAMPLE DAILY SCHEDULE

(The schedule may be adjusted depending on the weather/season.)

8:00 - 9:00	Breakfast
9:00 - 12:30	Garden Work / Class / Reading
12:30 - 2:30	Spot Watering / Lunch (one hour)
2:30 - 5:30	Garden Work / Class / Reading / Cooking
5:30 - 6:30	Evening Watering / Break *
6:30 - 7:30	Dinner *
7:30 - 9:00	Dishes and Kitchen Clean-up / Evening Watering */Studies and relaxation



### VACATIONS

In addition to the scheduled “week-ends”, each intern receives 7 vacation days in August, at a time that does not interfere with scheduled classes or garden activities. If you are interested in travelling while you are in the US, you should make sure that you schedule any longer trips to occur either before you begin the internship or after you finish it.

# CURRICULUM

The Intern's Summer Course is currently taught all day Monday for approximately the first three and ½ months of the internship. All interns participate in this course and the major classes include:

***Introduction of Ecology Action Goals; World Situation; "Tour", Course/Internship Overview: Classes, Garden Work, Responsibilities, Expectations: Mini-Farm Design Project; Independent Study Project, etc. Presentation of 21-Bed, 3-Bed and 1-Bed Units; Bed-Crop-Months; 72-Bed Unit***

***Advantages of GROW BIOINTENSIVE Bed Preparation***  
***Compost***  
***Compost Crops***  
***Diet***  
***Income***  
***Sustainability***  
***Fertilizers / Fertility***  
***Seed Propagation***

***Garden Planning***  
***Companion Planting***  
***Seed Collection/Saving***  
***Water Use/Arid Farming Techniques***  
***Human Waste Recycling***  
***Practical Watering Principles***  
***Insects and Diseases***  
***Philosophy/History***  
***Crafts: Lavender Wands***

***Depending on circumstances, Herbal Salves/Tinctures and/or Solar Oven Construction may be included.***

On even numbered years, GROW BIOINTENSIVE Teachers Workshops leading to certification are held in July. Presentations of the diet/compost/income mini-farms designed by each intern during the summer course will be presented in early September. In addition to the classes and project work during the Summer Course and the Teachers Workshop, interns have the option of revising their Mini-Farm Design Project, doing an all-nutrient evaluation of their diet design, or an Independent Study Project (with presentations in early October).



## INTERNSHIP EXPENSES

Since Ecology Action is a small, non-profit organization, financial aid is limited, and this is a fee-based internship, with cost estimates indicated in the tables on the next page.

Special scholarships or stipends may be available depending on the situation of the applicant (demonstrated merit and financial need) and the program they are associated with (ability of the applicant to use the skills they gain through the program to benefit their community and the planet). Funding may be provided by the program sponsoring the participant, by the participant him/herself, and/or corporations, foundations, and/or individuals. Please be sure to explore funding through all avenues available to you.

### COST ESTIMATE FOR A SIX-MONTH INTERNSHIP AT ECOLOGY ACTION, 2011

Direct Costs	Interns from the U.S.A.	Interns from Other Countries
Tuition	\$3,000*	\$3,000*
Room	1,200*	1,200*
Food	900	900
Publications	282	282
Supplies	300	300
Phone/Internet	180	180
Incidentals	1,200	1,200
Medical Insurance	700	700
Administration	900*	900*
Co-Sponsoring + visa	—	3,100
SEVIS Form	—	180
Transportation	300-600	700-3,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$8962-9262</b>	<b>\$12,642-14,942</b>
TOTALS if scholarship available	\$3862-4,162	\$7,542-9,842
OTHER COSTS: Follow Up	n/a	3,000 - 5,000
<b>GRANT TOTAL</b>	<b>\$8962-9262</b>	<b>\$15,642-19,942</b>
GRANT TOTAL if scholarship available	\$3862-4,162	\$10,542 -14,842
*Costs waived if scholarship is available—sometimes full scholarships occur.		

### COST ESTIMATE FOR A 12-MONTH INTERNSHIP AT ECOLOGY ACTION, 2011

Direct Costs	Interns from the U.S.A.	Interns from Other Countries
Tuition	\$6,000*	\$6,000*
Room	3,000*	3,000*
Food	1,560	1,560
Publications	282	282
Supplies	300	300
Phone/Internet	360	360
Incidentals	2400	2400
Medical Insurance	1400	1400
Administration	900*	900*
Co-Sponsoring + visa	—	3,100
SEVIS Form	—	180
Transportation	500-1,000	1,200-5,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$16,702-17,202</b>	<b>\$20,682-24,482</b>
TOTALS if scholarship available	\$6802-7302	\$10,782-14,582
OTHER COSTS: Follow Up	n/a	3,000 - 5,000
<b>GRANT TOTAL</b>	<b>\$16702-17,202</b>	<b>\$23,682-29,482</b>
GRANT TOTAL if scholarship available	\$6802-7302	\$13,782-19582
*Costs waived if scholarship is available—sometimes full scholarships occur.		

# SUGGESTED ITEMS FOR INTERNS TO BRING

Be prepared for rustic conditions with limited water and electricity

## **Notepads, pencils, etc.**

**Clothes** for hot or cold days, cool or cold evenings, rain, snow, etc., including rain gear. (Day-time temperatures at all sites can vary from 55°F to 105°F [12.7°C to 40.5°C] in one day, and night-time temperatures can be as low as 25°F [-4°C]). Old work clothes are best. Bring plenty — self-service laundry facilities are 30 minutes away by car, in town.

**Shoes/workboots** should have good tread. In addition to garden work, paths are steep, so make sure your feet are prepared! A good pair of waterproof boots with heavy treaded soles is also useful.

**A good sun hat** is a must. Remember to bring **sun screen/lotion** and a swimsuit, if desired. We try to allow time for a swim in a nearby pond, work and weather permitting.

**Towel, washcloth, etc.** — Solar showers will available at least every other day. Shavers and appliances need to be non-electric or battery-powered.

**Lighting** — Flashlights and possibly a battery-powered lantern, for reading at night. Bring plenty of operating rechargeable batteries.

## **Bedding:**

*International interns:* bedding will be provided.

*Optional for U.S. participants only:* sheets for full-size bed, pillow, pad, and other warm, durable sleeping items. If you do not bring your own bedding, it will be provided for you.

## **Other items:**

- Favorite vegetarian/vegan recipes
- Battery-operated radio and/or CD player and two sets of rechargeable batteries
- Musical instruments, art supplies, etc. are welcomed.

**Parking space is very limited** — small cars for US participants and/or car pooling is encouraged.



## ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

If you are not a US citizen and are travelling to the United States from another country, you should arrange for your visa to expire on the last day of your stay at Ecology Action. It is our understanding that you have 30 days after your visa expires to leave the U.S. \*NOTE: Ecology Action interns travelling on visas do not have the option of employment while participating in the program and are required by law to return home when their visa expires.

It is important to schedule your arrival at the research garden site in the early evening of the Sunday before you officially begin your internship, so that there will be time to settle in before things begin early Monday morning. For example, the 2011 internship officially starts Monday, the 18th of April; interns will be arriving on Sunday, the 17th of April.

If you are flying in and need us to arrange for transportation from the San Francisco Airport to the research site, you need to schedule your arrival for *Sunday morning* in order for us to get you to your site by early evening.

You should schedule your departure flight to leave the San Francisco Airport during the *late afternoon or evening* on the day listed below, as we will be leaving your research sites in the morning, and must allow time to reach the airport, which is approximately 3.5 hours away, and to leave time for airport processing (airports recommend arriving at least 2 hours before your flight is scheduled to depart).

- 6-month interns for 2011: depart Saturday October 15th 2011
- 12-month interns for 2011: depart Saturday April 14th 2012

Please note: The cost of any excess baggage fees on the return trip is the responsibility of the intern. It is a good idea to determine well in advance of your departure how much baggage you will be carrying.

Before you leave, you are responsible for removing your possessions and cleaning your living quarters so that the next interns have a comfortable and welcoming experience!



## FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

It is expected that graduates of the internship program are prepared to continue and/or initiate GROW BIOINTENSIVE mini-farms, classes, and other related activities for at least two years following the internship. During the period of the internship, participants will be able to work with a staff member to plan their future activities program. Those interns wishing to become GROW BIOINTENSIVE certified teachers should read Ecology Action Booklet #30 available online at [www.growbiointensive.org](http://www.growbiointensive.org).

## POST-INTERNSHIP TECHNICAL/FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ecology Action and its staff love our interns and are delighted to make this learning opportunity possible. After all, the next generation of GROW BIOINTENSIVE interns are pioneers and are a hope for sustainable agriculture around the globe. We often make special efforts to enable interns to come to this training and periodically take significant financial risks to ensure that participants are able to come to learn with us.

At the same time, it is important to note that Ecology Action is a very small, low-income (by U.S. standards) organization with a small staff, and is generally not in a position to make or find financial grants and/or to provide project/program gifts to participants or their projects (e.g. pumps, solar panels, computers, cameras, tools, etc.). Any technical funding assistance provided to a project/program by Ecology Action normally grows from evidence of a thorough understanding, use and practice of the GROW BIOINTENSIVE® method by the staff of the project seeking assistance, and normally occurs only after several years of evaluation.

Ecology Action's long-term emphasis is to enable the establishment of five worldwide GROW BIOINTENSIVE regional centers and national mini-ag demonstration centers and to promote quality assurance for GROW BIOINTENSIVE practices. Ecology Action has no additional projects of its own other than its mail-order service, Bountiful Gardens, and its organic gardening supply store, Common Ground. When independent GROW BIOINTENSIVE efforts are found to be worthy of assistance, Ecology Action sometimes takes the initiative to help such efforts. Ecology Action provides technical assistance through publications, workshops, certification, and so on, but rarely through financial assistance.



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