Calypso's Farmer Training Program
2015 Syllabus

Course Information
Title: Farmer Training Program
Number: NRM F195P-F01
Credits: 6 credits
Prerequisites: none
Location: Calypso Farm and Ecology Center – 4780 Old Nenana Highway
Meeting Time: Residential Course – May 1st – September 30th – M-F 8-5pm with some weekend activities
Office Hours: M-F 5-6pm and by appointment
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Instructors
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Course Readings and materials
**Farmer Training Program Reader** – this is a compilation of articles, and selected readings that are relevant to the course. This is a required resource and the cost is covered by the program tuition.

**Tools** – Each Student will be required to have an assortment of personal tools and will have access to checking out other necessary tools.

**Course Description**
Calypso’s Farmer Training Program offers a practical application of Natural Resource Management by offering a hands-on course in small-scale farming in Alaska. This is an experiential, outdoor course focused on a broad spectrum of practical, ecological farming skills and concepts, including but not limited to: greenhouse management, composting, field preparation, transplanting, direct seeding, hand cultivation, drip irrigation, pest management, harvest, marketing, raising livestock and more. The program also includes hands-on instruction in an array of traditional, farm-focused craft skills such as blacksmithing, hand processing of wool, woodworking, sewing and more! Additionally, students participate in a 18 week whole farm planning project which walks them through the creation of a successful whole farm plan and business plan. Students also have the opportunity to interact with the public, teach one another and teach youth visitors at the farm.

**Course Goals**
Calypso’s Farmer Training Program is designed to provide participants with the skills and experience necessary to embark on their own small-scale farming career with confidence. Participants measure their learning progress by using a checklist of learning benchmarks throughout the season. The personal checklists assist both the student and instructor in tailoring and targeting learning gaps through the season (a sample portion of the checklist is attached).

**Instructional Methods**
Calypso’s Farmer Training Program will be taught using a number of instructional methods, including:

- **Guided Field Instruction** – farming techniques, animal husbandry and the building and maintenance of farm infrastructure will be taught in small group settings and one-on-one.
- **Discussion Groups** – themed discussions will cover theoretical, experimental and controversial topics in agriculture – students will take turns researching and leading these sessions.
- **Workshops** – Afternoon workshop style classes will take place through the course, including the following (additional 1 time workshops are not listed and we have a few spaces in the 2015 schedule which as still TBA depending on instructor availability):
- Farm Business Planning (18 classes)
- Blacksmithing (8 classes)
- Wool – Hand Processing (6 classes)
- Machine Sewing (6 classes)
- Food Preservation (4 classes)
- Building (8 classes)
- Intro to Mechanics (4 classes)
- Graphic Design (4 classes)
- Natural Dyeing (2 classes)
- Shibori Dyeing (1 class)
- Introduction to Quick Books (1 class)
- Wood Working Basics (2 classes)
- Animal Husbandry (8 classes)
- Cooking (4 classes)
- Seed Saving (3 classes)
- Natural Balance & Allignment (6 classes)

**Individual project(s)** – Students will have the opportunity to carry out one or more individual farm projects, in addition to taking on farm responsibilities.

**Journaling** - All Students will be encouraged to keep a journal

**Individual Instruction** – The ratio of teachers to students in this program is 2:3 – which will allow for much individualized attention for students.

**Practice** – The hands-on nature of the program and the working farm setting will allow for daily practice of all skills and concepts learning in the program.

**Course Calendar** (a full, detailed calendar is available on Google.docs by request)

**May**
- Orientation
- Intro to Soils
- Intro to Greenhouse Management
- Seeds – general biology and ecology
- Greenhouse Seeding
- Soil Blocking
- Greenhouse Seeding
- Assessing Soil condition and health
- Bed Preparation
- Irrigation Methods
- Intro to Drip Irrigation
- Transplanting
• Direct Seeding
• Baking in a Wood-fired oven
• Intro to Animal Husbandry

June
• Direct marketing – CSA, Farmers Market, Restaurants
• Cultivation
• Weed Management
• Biodiversity in a farm ecosystem
• Basic Blacksmithing
• Intro to Farm Business Planning
• Intro to Wool Processing
• Intro to Farm Based Youth Education
• Harvesting Birch Bark
• Intro to birch bark weaving
• Harvest Techniques
• Post-Harvest Handling
• Food Safety
• Understanding GAP Guidelines
• Organic Certification – pros and cons
• Farm Visit – Large Animal Research Station – focus on animal husbandry

July
• In depth – harvest and direct marketing
• In depth – blacksmithing
• In depth – wool processing
• In depth – wood working
• Intro to building
• Intro to green woodworking
• Advanced Farm Business Planning
• Composting
• Pest Management
• Weed Management
• Chicken tractors
• Rotational grazing techniques
• Water collection techniques
• Water movement
• Farm Visit – Wild Rose Farm – intro to biodynamic agriculture
August
- In depth – animal husbandry
- In depth – blacksmithing
- In depth – wool processing
- In depth – wood working
- In depth – farm-based youth education
- Advanced composting
- Growing and marketing cut flowers
- Bouquet making
- Managing a Farm Stand
- Communicating with Restaurants as direct market customers
- Managing cover crops
- Crop Rotation
- Advanced Farm Business Planning
- Intro to seed saving and managing seed plants
- Farm Visits – Steve Masterman & Clair’s Cultivations – orchard focus

September
- In depth – animal husbandry
- In depth – food preservation
- In depth – farm-based youth education
- Seed Saving and Storage
- Building compost piles
- Sheet composting
- Fall bed preparation
- Food preservation
- Root cellaring
- Farm Visit – Kurt Wold, Pingo Farm – seed saving focus

Course Policies
Students must adhere to Calypso’s “Maintaining a Positive and Healthy Environment” policy – policy is attached. Students are also asked to sign a participant agreement – sample agreement is attached.

Evaluation and Grading
This course is graded – Pass / Fail. Passing the course is dependent on the following factors:
• **Course Attendance:** students must attend 85% of the course – this includes morning field sessions as well as afternoon workshops and guided instruction. Simple attendance records will be kept. Due to the hands-on nature of this course – high attendance is required. (Note, this expectation is made clear to all participants prior to the course). Exceptions can be made based on individual circumstances but must be explained in writing and attached to the student’s Final Evaluation.

• **Workshop Skills Assessment:** For all workshop topics, the instructor will fill out a skills assessment form for each student. Students must have gained a basic skill level in at least 75% in all of the Workshop topics in order to pass the class. Students each do a self-evaluation of skills and learning benchmarks and instructors do one for each student as well. They are able to schedule extra practice or instruction as needed to meet this requirement.

• **Learning Benchmarks:** Each student is required to keep a detailed self-evaluation (worksheet provided) of skills and concepts learned throughout the course. Students will meet monthly with the lead instructor to go through the learning benchmarks form – which will help identify instruction needed. The self-evaluation, learning benchmarks form must be completed in order to receive a passing grade. Students should feel exposed to a minimum of 90% of the subject areas and proficient in at least 75% of the subject areas.

• **Final Evaluation:** A summary of student performance, including: workshop assessments, learning benchmarks and a written evaluation will be provided to the student with the final grade. Copies of the students’ Final Evaluation will be available upon request.

**Support Services**
Each student will have one-on-one access to the Instructor and the Teaching Assistants throughout the course. Additionally, a member of Calypso’s Board of Directors will be available to support the students as needed.

**Disability Services**
Calypso Farm and Ecology Center does not discriminate against persons with disabilities of any kind. The hands-on nature of this course makes it especially suitable to students who prefer or need alternative learning settings. The course does involve significant physical movement and extensive walking up and down hills. Persons unable to do those activities may not be able to fully participate in the course. Accommodations for people with a variety of types of disabilities is possible and will be determined on a case by case basis.