

Volunteer Program Overview

At Black Creek Community Farm (BCCF) we strive to provide opportunities for community members to engage with our project in a direct, hands-on way. Our volunteers are instrumental in the growing of food, hosting of events, site improvements, children's programming, community outreach, and overall project development.

As a volunteer you can expect to:

- Receive an orientation about BCCF
- Receive training, guidance, and evaluation for your position or task
- Work in a safe and inclusive environment

BCCF expects its volunteers to:

- Complete their tasks efficiently and reliably
- Accept the guidance and decisions of the volunteer coordinator
- Have a willingness to learn, and participate in any relevant orientations, trainings, or meetings
- Respect BCCF policies and practices
- Track their contribution to the project by recording their volunteer hours

Organization History

BCCF has provided affordable organic vegetables and educational programming to our community since 2013. In 2018, we joined FoodShare's Supportive Partnership Platform, and we are currently working towards a community governance model. The eight acre property is part of the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority and is located in the Black Creek neighbourhood of Toronto.

The project is funded by a mixture of grants, donations, and project revenue. A full list of our supporters and partners can be found on our website (blackcreekfarm.ca/supporters).

Mission

To serve and enrich our community through a thriving farm, healthy food, hands-on training and learning experiences. To inspire the next generation by providing leadership in food justice, and supporting diverse natural and social ecosystems.

Vision

An urban agricultural centre that engages, educates, and empowers diverse communities, through sustainable food.

Programs

Current programs at BCCF include:

- **Farm School:** provides environmental education to children through school field trips
- **Urban Harvest:** collects surplus garden produce from neighbourhood homeowners and community gardens and donates it to local food banks, and runs food preservation workshops for local residents
- **Moms' Program:** a gardening and healthy lifestyle program for local moms and their children, involving participants in the growing, harvesting, cooking, and preserving of food
- **Farm Park:** food forest and pollinator garden development and maintenance, and the management of community garden spaces
- **Market Garden:** organic vegetable production for sale through a community-supported agriculture program and on-site farm store
- **Community Events:** various annual community events such as Family Day, Maple Syrup Day, Earth Day, Farm Festival, and Honey Bee Day
- **Corporate Programs:** provides an opportunity for workplaces to host meetings / team building activities, as well as volunteer in the market garden or other site development activities

Past programming included a Seniors' Program, Youth Program, and the Garden Resource Network. These programs are currently not in operation, but we hope to offer these programs again in the future.

Site Features

- **Braeburn House:** heritage building, project office, kitchen, washroom, meeting rooms
- **Barn and wash station:** tool/equipment storage, vegetable washing, vegetable cold storage
- **Pavilion:** outdoor meeting and gathering space, includes pizza oven
- **Outdoor classroom:** shaded seating area with blackboard for workshops or kids' activities
- **Greenhouses:** one for Market Garden production and one rented to Urban Harvest Seed Co.
- **Compost area:** west of greenhouses, for composting organic waste
- **Chicken coop:** houses the chickens and ducks
- **Backyard garden:** cultivated by the Mom's group, planted with herbal, medicinal and edibles
- **Fire pit:** behind the backyard garden, used for community events and kids' programming
- **Children's garden:** cultivated by the Farm School program
- **Senior's garden:** tall raised beds for accessible gardening
- **Community garden:** allotment plots for community members
- **Bee hives:** eight hives managed by the Toronto Beekeepers Collective
- **Food forest:** on west border of site, where edible or medicinal perennials have been planted (including many different fruit trees)
- **Pollinator gardens:** areas planted with a mixture of different flowering plants to provide consistent and diverse habitat for various pollinating insects

- **Farm fields:** for Market Garden and Afri-Can Food Basket vegetable production

Policies and Procedures

BCCF is committed to a safe work environment and follows FoodShare Toronto's *Workplace Violence and Harassment Policy* and *Workplace Health and Safety Policy*.

As a volunteer you have the right to refuse unsafe work, and to be free from violence and harassment. Violence and harassment complaints can be registered with your volunteer supervisor or with another BCCF staff.

Please report any unsafe work conditions to the volunteer supervisor. In the event of an injury, after appropriate first aid has been administered, we must fill out an incident report to help us improve our practices and to serve as a record of what happened.

Volunteer Registration, Application, and Tracking

All volunteers must fill out a general registration form on our TimeCounts webpage (timecounts.org/blackcreekfarm).

All of our volunteer positions are listed on our TimeCounts webpage and you should apply for positions through there. Some positions require approval so always make sure your application has been confirmed before coming.

Volunteers are asked to record their hours for every volunteer shift, on a sign-in sheet hanging next to the front door. Volunteers have an incredible impact on what the project is able to accomplish and we want to make sure that we are tracking and recognizing this contribution.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact volunteer@blackcreekfarm.ca

What to Bring With You

Many of our volunteer positions are outside and as such we recommend bringing:

- Sun protection (hat, sunglasses, sunscreen, and/or long sleeves)
- Close-toed shoes/boots
- Rain gear, warm clothing; as needed
- Refillable water bottle
- Snacks or lunch
- Gardening gloves (if you have a pair that you prefer; we have extras if not)

Weather Policy

Outdoor volunteer placements will run rain or shine; unless weather conditions are expected to be particularly bad, in which case we will email to cancel the session with as much notice as we can. In

the case that bad weather crops up in the middle of a volunteer session, outdoor work will cease in the event of thunder and lightning, or other potential factors (e.g., high wind, hail).