

# North American Biodynamic Apprenticeship Program Skills Checklists

(Revised June 2013)

The skills checklists are an important tool in the apprenticeship program and serve several purposes. Mentor farmers use them to indicate which skills an apprentice can acquire on their farm, apprentices and their mentors use them to plan and document the apprentice's progress, and the checklists also serve as a transcript of the apprentices' achievement through their on-farm training.

The 40 skills **marked in bold** are the **minimum required skills** that apprentices must acquire over the course of their training (on one or more farms) in order to receive NABDAP certification. An apprentice must become proficient at each of these 40 skills (listed in rows) applied to at least one specific area of practice (listed in columns). Proficiency here means the ability to successfully and consistently perform a task without supervision.

## ***Instructions for Mentor Farmers***

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1. Create a **skills template for your farm** by marking a set of checklists.
  - Go through the following checklists and determine which skills you are **willing and able to teach apprentices** on your farm. **Mark the relevant skills with an "x" on the left side of the box.** It is not necessary to mark all of the required skills – most apprentices will complete their training on several different farms and can acquire on other farms the skills not taught on yours.
  - Write your name and the name of your farm on the bottom of each page. Do not sign this template of your skills checklists.
  - Send a copy of your farm skills template to the NABDAP Central Coordinator, who will post it on the NABDAP website as part of your farm profile.
2. Create an **individualized set of skills checklists for each NABDAP apprentice** by copying your farm skills template and recording exactly which skills you agree will be taught to that apprentice during his or her stay on your farm.
  - Meet individually with the apprentice before they begin their apprenticeship to discuss their learning goals and what they can expect to learn on your farm.
  - **Place a circle around the relevant x's on a photocopy of your farm skills template** to indicate exactly which skills you have agreed **will be taught to that apprentice.**
  - Fill in your name, the name of your farm, and the name of the apprentice at the bottom of each checklist (but **do not sign the pages yet**) and make a copy of these individualized checklists for the apprentice.
  - Revisions can be made at any time by mutual agreement between you and the apprentice.
3. **Document each apprentice's progress** by marking their individualized checklists.
  - On an apprentice's individualized checklists, make three successive checkmarks in the relevant box as each skill is: 1) demonstrated and observed 2) practiced under supervision 3) successfully performed independently. Also make sure that the apprentice understands how they are progressing.
4. At the end of each apprentice's stay, **create an official record of the skills they have learned.**
  - On the apprentice's individualized set of checklists where you have used checkmarks to indicate his or her progress, make sure that all the **information at bottom of each page** is filled out **except for your signature.**
  - **Make two photocopies** of this set of checklists and **sign each checklist in each set.** (First photocopying the checklists and *then* signing them helps ensure that they cannot subsequently be altered.)
  - Give your apprentice **both** sets of signed checklists, one set for the apprentice to keep and one set to send to the NABDAP Central Coordinator.

## Instructions for Apprentices

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1. To ensure that a particular farm will meet your learning needs and the requirements for NABDAP certification, first carefully **review the farm's skills checklists (farm skills template)**, usually posted as part of the farm profile on the NABDAP website ([www.biodynamics.com/nabdap-participating-mentor-farms](http://www.biodynamics.com/nabdap-participating-mentor-farms)). Each skill that can potentially be learned at that farm will be indicated by an x in the relevant box, but due to various circumstances it may not be possible to teach some of them during your stay on that farm (see #2).
2. When you interview with a mentor farmer, discuss your learning goals and exactly which skills you can expect to be taught during your stay at that farm. Using the farm skills template (your mentor should provide you with a copy), **circle each x (skill) that you and your mentor agree you will be taught**. You and your mentor will each keep a copy of these individualized checklists. Revisions can be made by mutual agreement at any time. (Note: As you progress through the training program, make sure that you are setting yourself up to *acquire at least the skills required for NABDAP certification* – listed on the checklists in **bold**. The Regional Coordinators are available to support and guide you with this.)
3. **Keep track of your progress** by making successive checkmarks in the relevant box for each skill when you have 1) observed it, 2) practiced it under supervision, and 3) performed it independently. During meetings with your mentor, compare your copy of the checklists to your mentor's and discuss any discrepancies between them.
4. When you leave a farm, **make sure that you get two photocopies of your mentor's set of checklists and that she or he has signed each checklist in each set**. Keep one signed photocopy as your record of achievement at that farm, and send the second copy to the NABDAP Central Coordinator. At the end of your training the Central Coordinator will use all the checklists you have submitted to verify that you are proficient at all the skills required for NABDAP certification.

## Summary of symbols to be used in the skills checklists

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×	this skill <b>can be learned</b> on this farm (farm skills template)
⊗	this skill <b>will be taught</b> to this apprentice (individualized agreement)
⊗ ✓	apprentice <b>has observed</b> a demonstration of this skill
⊗ ✓✓	apprentice <b>has practiced</b> this skill under supervision
⊗ ✓✓✓	apprentice <b>can perform this skill independently</b>

Note: on the skills checklists, "NA" means *not applicable* and a slash (/) means *or*

The NABDAP Skills Checklists are adapted from *Becoming a Biodynamic Farmer or Gardener: A Handbook for Prospective Trainees*, by Malcolm and Susan Gardner. They may be freely used, shared and distributed with attribution to the Biodynamic Farming and Gardening Association, [www.biodynamics.com/nabdap](http://www.biodynamics.com/nabdap)

## I. Plant Cultivation & Management

<i>Type of Crop:</i>	Green-house Crops	Vegetables	Herbs	Grain Crops	Silage or Hay Crops	Bushes, Berries, Hedges	Fruit or Nut Orchards	Timber, Firewood or Sap	Other:
<i>Skills</i>									
making compost	X	X							
making special soil mixes	X								
preparing topsoil/primary tillage		X		X	X				
preparing seedbed/secondary tillage	X	X							
cover cropping/green manuring		X		X	X				
calculating spacing/quantities	X	X	X	X	X				
direct seeding/transplanting	X	X	X						
propagating/grafting	X	X	X	NA	NA	X			
weeding/pruning	X	X	X				X		
judging water needs/watering	X	X	X						
shading/freeze protection	X	X	X						
identifying weeds/diseases/pests	X	X	X						
judging readiness for harvest	X	X	X	X	X				
harvesting/mowing/felling/tapping	X	X	X			X	X		
post-harvest handling/hygiene	X	X	X						
record keeping	X	X	X						
soil testing/determining fertility needs		X		X	X				
subsoiling									
supplemental fertilizing									
pollinating									
seed saving/cleaning									
designing cropping sequences		X		X	X				
selecting mixes/companion plants					X				
controlling weeds/diseases/pests	X	X							
other:									

REQUIRED SKILLS

Name of Mentor: Steve Decater

Name of Farm: Live Power Community Farm

Name of Apprentice: \_\_\_\_\_

Dates of Apprenticeship:     /     /     to     /     /    

Mentor's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. Animal Husbandry

	<i>Type of Animal:</i>	Cattle	Horses	Pigs	Sheep	Goats	Poultry	Bees	Other:
<i>Skills</i>									
REQUIRED SKILLS	basic safety procedures	X	X	X	X				
	feeding/watering	X	X	X	X		X		
	bedding/housing	X	X	X	X		X		
	grooming/cleaning		X						
	moving/herding/handling	X	X	X	X		X		
	erecting/maintaining fences	X			X		X	NA	
	pasture management	X			X		X		
	haying/forage collection	X		X	X				
	manure composting/prepping	X	X		X		X		
	collecting milk/eggs/fleece/honey	X			X		X		
	post-collection hygiene/storage	X			X		X		
	raising young stock	X		X	X				
	record keeping	X			X		X		
	breeding/inseminating	X			X				
	assisting pregnancy/birth	X			X			NA	
castrating/docking/clipping				X			NA		
checking health/treating simple illness	X			X					
culling/slaughtering							NA		
other:									
<p>Name of Mentor: <u>Steve Decater</u></p> <p>Name of Farm: <u>Live Power Community Farm</u></p> <p>Name of Apprentice: _____</p> <p>Dates of Apprenticeship: __/__/____ to __/__/____</p> <p>Mentor's Signature: _____</p>									

### 3. Biodynamic Preparations

↑ REQUIRED SKILLS ↓	<i>Preparation:</i>	500 Horn manure	501 Horn silica	502 Yarrow	503 Chamo- mile	504 Nettle	505 Oak bark	506 Dande- lion	507 Valerian	508 Horse- tail	Barel Comp.	P e p p e r s			Other:
	<i>Skills</i>											Weed	Inwab	Verteb.	
	“prepping” compost pile	NA	NA	X	X	X	X	X	X	NA	X				
	stirring preparations	X	X	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	X						
	calibrating sprayer/spraying	X	X	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	X						
	storing appropriately	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X				
	record keeping	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X				
	collecting/grinding minerals	NA	X	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	
	harvesting plant parts	X	NA										NA	NA	
	collecting/"potentizing" manure	X	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA		NA	NA	NA	
	acquiring animals/animal parts	NA	NA		X	NA	X	X	NA	NA	NA	NA			
	stuffing animal sheaths	X	X	X	X	NA	X	X	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	
	selecting hanging/burial sites	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	NA	NA	X	NA	NA	NA	
	hanging/burying/exhuming	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	NA	NA	X	NA	NA	NA	
	evaluating finished preps	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X				
	selecting ashing times	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA		X		
	burning specimens	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA		X		
	spreading/spraying peppers	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA		X		
	other:														

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Name of Farm: Live Power Community Farm

Name of Apprentice: \_\_\_\_\_ Dates of Apprenticeship: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Mentor's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## 4. Machine-Powered Equipment

↑ REQUIRED SKILLS ↓	<i>Equipment:</i>	<i>Electric</i>			<i>Internal Combustion</i>					<i>Pneumatic Handheld Tools</i>	<i>Other:</i>	
		Hand Power Tools	Bench Tools	Welding Tools	String Trim- mers	Chain- saws	Walk- behinds	ATVs	Trucks	Tractors		
	<i>Skills:</i>											
	safety procedures	X				X			X			
	emergency procedures	X				X			X			
	basic operation	X				X			X			
	record keeping	X				X			X			
	using implements/attachments											
	troubleshooting											
	routine maintenance											
	small repairs											
	other:											

## 5. Draft Animals

<i>Basic Skills</i>	<i>Type of Animal:</i>	Oxen	Horses	Mules/ Donkeys	Other:
harnessing/hitching			X		
multiple hitches			X		
maintaining equipment			X		
driving/carting			X		
plowing/log skidding etc.			X		
powering stationary machines					
training young animals					
record keeping			X		
other:					

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Mentor's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## 6. Basic Business Management

<i>Skill</i>	
supervising crews	X
dealing with customers	X
dealing with visitors	X
dealing with schoolchildren	X
dealing with journalists	
dealing with regulators/inspectors	
designing/producing newsletters	X
organizing festivals/public events	X
planning/budgeting	X
accounting	X
market research	X
marketing/designing packaging	X
setting up a CSA	X
other:	

## 7. Basic Crafts

<i>Skills</i>	<i>Craft:</i>	Sewing/ Clothes- making	Felting/ Spinning	Natural Dyeing	Knitting/ Weaving	Tanning/ Leather- work	Soap- making	Candle- making	Basketry	Other:
safety procedures										
using materials										
using tools										
simple projects				X						
designing										
other:										

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## 8. Basic Processing

<i>Food or Medicine:</i>	Milk	Meat/ Poultry	Fish	Grains	Vegetables	Herbs	Fruits	Other:
<i>Skills</i>								
general cooking/baking	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
making butter/cheese	X		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	
preserving/drying/fermenting	X			X	X	X	X	
concentrating juice/sap	NA	NA	NA			NA		
extracting oils/fats								
making sausage		X		NA	NA	NA	NA	
making wine/beer	NA	NA	NA					
making tinctures/essences	NA	NA	NA					
making salves								
other:								

## 9. Basic Construction

<i>Type of Construction:</i>	Carpentry	Masonry	Machining	Electrical	Plumbing	Road- building	Other:
<i>Skills</i>							
safety procedures	X			X	X		
using tools	X			X	X		
using materials	X			X	X		
simple projects	X				X		
surveying/layout	X			X	X		
blueprint reading							
estimating materials/costs							
other:							

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