

# 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**

---

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

---

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

---

×	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)

# 1. Plant Cultivation & Management

Type of Crop:	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							
making special soil mixes									
preparing topsoil/primary tillage	X	X	X						
preparing seedbed/secondary tillage	X	X	X						
cover cropping/green manuring		X	X						
calculating spacing/quantities	X	X	X						
direct seeding/transplanting	X	X	X						
propagating/grafting	X	X	X	NA	NA		X		
weeding/pruning	X	X	X						
judging water needs/watering	X	X	X				X		
shading/freeze protection	X	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				X		
record keeping	X	X	X				X		
soil testing/determining fertility needs	X	X							
subsoiling		X	X						
supplemental fertilizing	X	X							
pollinating									
seed saving/cleaning		X	X						
designing cropping sequences	X	X	X						
selecting mixes/companion plants									
controlling weeds/diseases/pests	X	X							
other:									

REQUIRED SKILLS

Name of Mentor: Greg York, Jean-Paul Derrenour, Brett Buckle

Name of Farm: Thanks Living Farm at the Center for Discovery

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:
<u>Skills</u>								
basic safety procedures	X		X	X		X	X	
feeding/watering	X		X	X		X	X	
bedding/housing	X		X	X		X	X	
grooming/cleaning	X		X	X		X		
moving/herding/handling	X		X	X		X	X	
erecting/maintaining fences	X		X	X		X	NA	
pasture management	X		X	X		X	X	
haying/forage collection	X		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	X	
raising young stock	X		X	X		X	X	
record keeping	X		X	X		X	X	
breeding/inseminating	X		X	X				
assisting pregnancy/birth	X		X	X			NA	
castrating/docking/clipping	X		X	X			NA	
checking health/treating simple illness	X		X	X		X	X	
culling/slaughtering	X		X	X		X	NA	
other:								

REQUIRED SKILLS

Name of Mentor: Brett Budds

Name of Farm: Thanksgiving Farm at The Center for Discovery

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

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

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

### 3. Biodynamic Preparations

← REQUIRED SKILLS →

Preparation: <i>Skills</i>	500 Horn manure		501 Horn silica		502 Yarrow		503 Chamo- mille		504 Nettle		505 Oak bark		506 Dandel- ion		507 Valerian		508 Horse- tail		Barrel Comp.		Peppers			Other:
	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Weed	Inveteb.	Verteb.		
“prepping” compost pile	NA	NA	NA	NA	X	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	
stirring preparations	X	X	X	X	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	
calibrating sprayer/spraying	X	X	X	X	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	
storing appropriately	X	X	X	X	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	
record keeping																								
collecting/grinding minerals	NA	NA	X	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	
harvesting plant parts			NA	NA	X	NA	X	NA	X	NA	X	NA	X	NA	X	NA	X	NA	X	NA	NA	NA	NA	
collecting/"potentizing" manure	X	X	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	
acquiring animals/animal parts	NA	NA	NA	NA																				
stuffing animal sheaths	X	X	X	X	X	NA	X	NA	X	NA	X	NA	X	NA	X	NA	X	NA	X	NA	NA	NA	NA	
selecting hanging/burial sites	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
hanging/burying/exhuming	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
evaluating finished preps	X	X																						
selecting ashing times	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	
burning specimens	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	
spreading/spraying peppers	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	
other:																								

Name of Mentor: John David Devereaux

Name of Farm: Thalyspring Farm @ the Center for Discovery

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

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

## 4. Machine-Powered Equipment

<i>Equipment:</i>	Electric			Internal Combustion					Pneumatic Handheld Tools	Other:	
	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			X		
emergency procedures	X			X		X			X		
basic operation	X			X		X			X		
record keeping	X			X					X		
using implements/attachments						X					
troubleshooting											
routine maintenance											
small repairs											
other:											

## 5. Draft Animals

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

Name of Mentor: Brett Buddle - Jean-David Desrosiers

Name of Farm: Thanksgiving Farms at The Center for Discovery

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

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

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

## 6. Basic Business Management

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

## 7. Basic Crafts

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

Name of Mentor: Greg York, Brett Budde, Jan-David Terrence

Name & Address of Farm: Thanksgiving Farm at the Center for Discovery

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

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

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

## 8. Basic Processing

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

## 9. Basic Construction

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

Name of Mentor: Jean-David Terrence

Name & Address of Farm: Thanksgiving Farm at the Center for Discovery

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

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

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