



Questions and Answers About ECO CITY FARMS at Bladensburg

What is ECO City Farms at Bladensburg?

ECO City Farms at Bladensburg at 6100 Emerson Street is a three-acre space above the Autumn Woods Apartments where healthy, chemical free food is grown for the surrounding community. It is operated by ECO City Farms, which also operates an urban farm in Edmonston. The purpose of the farm is to provide fresh vegetables for local people who have difficulty obtaining healthy food. The produce is available to people who live, work, play or worship in the Bladensburg neighborhoods surrounding Autumn Woods Apartments, Emerson House, Parkway Condominiums, and Hamlin Woods.

What are you trying to do with this farm?

We want to reconnect people with the production of food and healthy food-ways, and we welcome the involvement and ideas of area residents on how we can best accomplish this goal. Bladensburg contains areas that are designated as food deserts—places without ready access to fresh food, especially if you don't have a car. Rates of obesity and other food-related health conditions like diabetes are high in this area, and studies show they can be lowered by eating more fresh fruit and vegetables. ECO City Farms plans to provide instruction on nutrition and cooking at the farm to help people increase their food choices by learning how to incorporate more fruits and vegetables daily into their diets.

Who is ECO City Farms?

ECO City Farms is a nonprofit educational farming enterprise with offices in Riverdale. Our slogan is: *"We grow great food, farms and farmers."* ECO is part of the Port Towns Community Health Partnership which works to improve access to healthy food in the Port Towns of Cottage City, Edmonston, Bladensburg and Colmar Manor, and in other inner Beltway communities that lack access to fresh food. ECO's urban farm in nearby Edmonston sells food at the Riverdale Park Farmers Market and offers a weekly farm share to area residents. At ECO City Farms in Edmonston, we also offer community nutrition and cooking lessons, PG Community College courses, a summer youth program, apprenticeships and educational events focused on healthy eating, active living. To learn more about us, visit: www.ecocityfarms.org.

How can I get the Bladensburg farm's produce?

ECO will have a farm stand at the Bladensburg farm and sell produce weekly on Saturday mornings. Local produce will also be available weekly through the *Eat Local Farm Share*. Purchasers can pre-pay for a month of food and pick up it up weekly at the farm. The cost of a pre-packaged weekly share is less than buying separate items at the stand. ECO accepts SNAP and WIC, and those who use these methods can pay weekly instead of monthly.

Will the produce be free?

No, but ECO charges lower prices than are typically charged in stores or Farmers Markets that sell

comparable chemical-free produce. Moreover, we gladly accept SNAP, WIC and Farmers Market Nutrition Program vouchers, and will offer payment plans for weekly farm share customers.

Why is this produce different from what I can find in a store?

Freshly picked, locally grown produce tastes better and has greater nutritional value than food that you find in a grocery store. Produce picked and eaten within hours of harvest has far more nutrients and flavor than food which was picked unripe days, sometimes weeks before, refrigerated and shipped thousands of miles before it gets to a grocery store shelf. Furthermore, ECO's produce is grown without the use of any harmful artificial pesticides or fertilizers. We farm using organic and permaculture methods and it shows in the flavor and nutrients of our produce.

Will this be a community garden where I can have a plot?

No, this is a working farm where food is grown intensively for delivery to residents. However, ECO encourages and supports backyard, container and patio gardening, and can connect you to resources for growing your own food. ECO will create an educational youth garden this summer.

I love gardening – how can I help with the farm?

ECO welcomes volunteers, interns and apprentices at the farm. There will be regularly scheduled volunteer workdays weekly starting in April on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 10-12, and on the 2nd and 4th Saturdays of the month. Community members are also encouraged to participate on the Community Action Team – a core group of residents that will help shape activities and programs related to the farm. Contact Viviana Lindo at lindo@ecocityfarms.org or call 301-288-1125 for more information.

When will the farm be open?

The farm will be open every Saturday morning from June to October during market hours and during the volunteer work hours listed above. ECO's staff will be there working throughout the week and will have weekly after-school hours for community youth. Tours and visits can also be arranged.

If young people volunteer, can they get community service hours required by their school?

Yes, we are a provider of community service hours. Young people must commit to volunteer on a regular schedule to receive credit.

Are you hiring people to work at the farm?

Currently, our existing staff maintain the farm, but we see great possibility in providing local work as the farm expands and takes off.

Do you have other programming for youth?

In addition to weekly volunteer hours, ECO offers the *Seed to Feed* Summer Youth Program--a six week farm camp for youth aged 13-17 to learn about growing food, nutrition and cooking that is free to residents of the towns of Edmonston, Bladensburg, Cottage City and Colmar Manor. We also support the *Magic Johnson Empowerment Center* at Autumn Woods with a youth garden for 9 to 12 year olds. For information contact Viviana Lindo: lindo@ecocityfarms.org or call 301-288-1125.