



## Online Certificate in Organic Vegetable Seed Production

### Optional Practicum Placement

An optional 40-hour in-field experiential learning practicum placement is available to students registered in the Organic Vegetable Seed Production Course at an additional cost of \$400 + taxes\*. Students will be connected with a seed production mentor in their region who can host them for a 40-hour, work study practicum over the timeframe of the course (April 9<sup>th</sup> to November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018).

This practicum exercise is an important and distinctive offering which brings practice-based learning to the online learning format.

Students will be provided with contact information for potential mentors that are within their region and are expected to connect with hosts to make arrangements for completing their 40-hour placement. The placement is meant to be flexible, and students may arrange with the host mentor how they want to complete their practicum hours and what skills/topics they want to focus on (see suggested topic list on the next page). For example, students may want to complete a one week, intensive placement at their host's farm or they may want to spread the 40 hours over a few months\*\*. It is up to the student and the course host to decide what works best.

In conjunction with the 40 hour practicum, students will be expected to complete an online journal of their experience to share with other students and the course instructor. This could be a photo diary with captions or just a plain journal. The student will be expected to still make posts during the course summer break if that is when they are completing their practicum hours. The host mentor will also be asked to complete an evaluation form of the student.

#### Important notes:

\*Should we not be able to find a suitable host for the student because of a lack of available mentors within a reasonable travel distance to the student, we will provide a full refund for the cost of the practicum.

\*\*Students are responsible for their own transportation to the practicum location and accommodation if needed. Some hosts may have accommodation available but that should not be assumed and may come at an additional cost.

Language requirements: We will do our best to place students in comfortable language environments. If you would prefer to complete your practicum in a language other than English, please indicate this in your application and we will look for a host who can accommodate your preferred language. Language accommodations are not guaranteed, however; and you will be expected to complete your practicum journal in English along with all the course assignments.

## **Suggested Topics to address during the practicum**

*Students and mentors should aim to address as many of the topics listed below over the duration of the practicum; however, this is at your own discretion. Should the student prefer to spend all 40 hours on a single topic that is permissible, but it is up to the student and the host to decide.*

1. Selecting seed crops
  - Understanding how to decide which seed crop to grow in a given region/location
  - Mentor to work with student in identifying how they decide what to grow
2. Developing a vision for the crop
  - Understanding the possible goal for a seed crop: variety maintenance, varietal improvement, population shifting, seed stock, breeding
  - Identifying goals for selected seed crops
3. Isolation distance
  - Identifying ideal isolation distances for selected seed crops
  - Identifying strategies to reduce/eliminate isolation needs: physical isolation, hand-pollination, time separation
4. Population size
  - Identifying right population size for selected seed crops
  - Identifying ways to maintain adequate population sizes without compromising quality
5. Selection practices
  - Understanding selection practices and its various goals
  - Identifying potential selection pressures to apply
  - Understanding selection for commercial seed crops and stock seeds
6. Harvest techniques
  - Identifying the various manual and mechanical harvest techniques
7. Cleaning techniques
  - Identifying the various material and equipment available and adequate for selected seed crops (both wet and dry seed crops)
8. Storage
  - Identifying the ideal storage conditions for selected seed crops
9. Quality
  - Identifying the various indicators of quality (seed weight, color, disease pressure observed, vigor, etc)
  - Understanding the practice and various techniques for germination testing and/or vigor testing
  - Understanding the value of on-farm variety trials
10. Economics
  - Understanding the general economics of seed or of the given practicum farm (what are the outlets, how do they organize their commercial seed systems)
  - Mentor to work with practicum in identifying the economics of at least one seed crop (from seed to seeds)
11. Record keeping
  - Understanding record keeping needs for business and quality control.

- Identifying record keeping needs for organic integrity

**Ideas for advanced students**

1. Deeper involvement in making selection on given seed crops
2. Student selecting a seed crop they would be responsible for from seed to seeds
3. Possibility in working closely with a population to improve (heavy roguing)
4. Possibility in initiating a breeding project (multiple year commitment)
5. Taking initiative in managing a section of the operation such as wet seed cleaning, germination testing, marketing, etc.

For more information about the practicum, please call 1-888-375-7383 or email [Ashley@cog.ca](mailto:Ashley@cog.ca) or [sarah@cog.ca](mailto:sarah@cog.ca).