

# Big Small Farm Inc. - Handbook

Version 2.02 – January 2015

## ***Vision***

## **Mission**

Mission of Big Small Farm Inc. (“BSF”) is (i) to create a framework and infrastructure that will help aspiring farmers who are interested in raising food in Central Florida in environmentally sustainable ways to transition from the initial vision to a profitable farm or related business of their own, and (ii) to increase availability of healthy sustainably-raised local food for organizations and individuals in Central Florida region.

The main methods used to fulfill this mission are:

- 1) Educating people interested in growing food (whether commercially or for their own consumption) on advanced methods and techniques (such as permaculture) that allow maximization of yields and food quality while minimizing negative impacts on the environment and community.
- 2) Creating and maintaining a demonstration site showcasing such advanced methods.
- 3) Providing aspiring farmers with a chance to work with and learn from experienced farmers, helping them to start their own business and become part of the local farming community and providing access to shared marketing and sales infrastructure; all aimed at helping the aspiring farmers with limited resources and experience to survive the critical first years and become successful self-sustaining businesses.

Main duty of a BSF directors and officers is to make sure that everything BSF does helps it to fulfill its Mission. When in doubt, use this as a test to guide your decisions.

## **Values**

*“Values. Your group’s vision arises out of its shared values, the characteristics and processes you deem worthy. Values are expressed by how you behave now, and how you intend to behave, on a daily basis, as you live in community.”*

*Diana Leafe Christian , Creating Life Together*

We feel that our values should align with the three Ethics of permaculture, which are:

1. Care of the Earth
2. Care of people, and
3. Return of the surplus to the system that produced it.

If it is observed that values of a BSF member (be it a director, officer, intern, volunteer or renter) do not align with those of BSF, such misalignment may be a ground for removal of such member and/or termination of the lease agreement with a renter.

### ***Interpretation of the Ethics***

Great many articles (and even books) deal with the interpretation of the Ethics and their practical applications and anyone interested in in-depth understanding should have no problems accessing these materials.

To summarize it briefly, the Ethics pretty much mean what they sound like – one should take care of the Earth to leave it richer and healthier than it was when we came here. One should take care of the people because people are part of the Earth and even extremely advanced food growing techniques taking great care of the Earth do not lead to stable and healthy society if care of people is neglected (medieval China is a good example of that). And after one's needs are satisfied, the surplus should be returned to the system that produced the yield, since this is the only way to have a truly sustainable system. For example, someone who received an abundant harvest must try to return the surplus left after his needs are satisfied to the land that provided the harvest, in form of mulch, compost, natural fertilizer or anything else that makes the soil healthier. Another example would be a person who receives help from the community - he must return the favor by taking care of the members who need it just like he himself was taken care of in the time of need.

### ***Examples of techniques and behaviors contradicting our values:***

1. Using or storing chemical fertilizers, bio-cides (pesticides, weed killers, etc.) or GMOs anywhere within BSF borders.
2. Over-stocking, over-fishing, over-harvesting, over-anything since that violates the Third Ethic – if the system can not recover easily after you took your share, you're taking too much.
3. Lying about your practices (what you do on your BSF plot) or taking advantage of other BSF members are good examples of violation of the Second Ethic.
4. Doing things that may get BSF or any of the members in troubles with DMYS<sup>1</sup> and hurt any of the people who count on BSF for fulfilling their dreams or making their living.
5. Cutting or damaging a live tree bigger than 10” trunk diameter without written permission from BSF.

This is not a complete list and these are just examples of some things people can do to violate the Ethics. There are probably thousands of other examples that are not included in this list. When in doubt – BSF officers or more experienced members. Rule “it's better to ask for forgiveness than for permission” may work with a county bureaucrats but it is definitely not how we do things at BSF because we all depend on each other and because it's way too easy for one careless person to create serious problems for everybody else. BSF is a

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<sup>1</sup> DMYS – Department of Making You Sad – term used to describe any and all bodies of governments of all levels that have enough power to take away your freedom, money or prevent you from doing what you want; coined by Paul Wheaton.

beehive, not a wolf pack. If you're ready to join a wolf pack – you don't need an incubator.

## **Goals**

*“Goals ... are milestones you commit yourselves to accomplish, but short-term, often in a few months or a year. Your community’s goals are measurable: you know when you’ve accomplished them.”*

*Diana Leafe Christian , Creating Life Together*

As of January 2015, our goals are:

- Revive BSF and put it on the map, both as classes provider and demonstration site
- Find volunteers to fill the key positions
- Develop connections with our neighbors in Sumter county, including the extension office.
- Finalize master plan of the site.
- Develop partnership with a rare and useful plants nursery (or create one).
- Develop biochar production for our own needs and possibly, for sale.
- Build a facility to host classes and conduct such classes for people who want to learn about anything food related.

[this section needs to be reviewed and updated every 6 months]

## **Members**

(Directors, Officers, Renters, Interns and Volunteers)

## **Directors**

The Board should decide on the most important and strategic issues affecting BSF as a whole, as determined by the Board. Routine business issues should be left to the officers, Excom and Working Groups as much as possible. Examples of the issues that only Board can decide include:

1. Changing this Handbook
2. Issues related to master lease of the property
3. [to be added if needed]

Presently, the Board consists of Leon Elt, Jono Neiger and Anna Scott.

## **Officers**

Officers run BSF and handle all day-to-day decisions. When this Handbook or other BSF documents say that something is “to be decided by BSF” it means that the decision will be made by the relevant officer(s).

Currently, there are 2 officers – Leon Elt (President) and Andrew Jackson (General Counsel).

[to be expanded as needed]

## **Interns**

Usually, interns are former volunteers who have proven their commitment to BSF. The decision to offer someone internship is made by the existing interns and approved by BSF.

Each intern is usually in charge of a certain area or aspect of BSF. The interns are paid a stipend.

[more details will come as the program develops]

## **Volunteers**

Becoming a volunteer is a starting point for any career path at BSF – whether one's ultimate goal is to start your own agribusiness, find an apprenticeship with a commercial farmer or become a BSF officer, one starts by volunteering for a period of time sufficient to prove the seriousness of one's intentions and give a chance to other BSF members to get acquainted with the new member.

To become a volunteer, please attend one of the public tours and talk to the person leading it or send an e-mail to [info@bigsmallfarm.org](mailto:info@bigsmallfarm.org)

Volunteers enjoy all of the Member's Benefits, as described below.

## **Renters**

If a BSF member has an idea for an agribusiness that would fill a need of BSF (for example, nursery) an arrangement can be made for that member to sub-lease part of the land leased by BSF and use it for such agribusiness. This is decided by BSF on a case by case basis and is an exception. As a general rule BSF will help its members who are ready to strike on their own to find a lease with a commercial farmer or landowner.

## **Member's Benefits**

Besides obvious ones like the experience and ability to put that on your resume, BSF is a recognized 501(c)3 organization, so volunteering for BSF should satisfy community work, internship or volunteer hours requirements (check with your school if that's the case for you!). It also can be a tax-deductible contribution.

As far as more tangible rewards go, member get discounts for products and services of BSF and its partner farms, ability to attend invitation-only tours, classes and events, reimbursement for certain expenses, preferential access to natural resources and recreational opportunities at BSF and partner farms and first dibs on the volunteer positions that may become regular paid positions.

## ***Life in BSF***

### **Excom**

Excom should decide on all matters that are not dealt with by the Board of Directors or Officers but involve issues concerning more than one Working Group. All Excom's decisions need to be approved by BSF, which approval shall not be unreasonably withheld.

[rules of procedure – add when needed]

### **Working Groups**

Working Groups (“WG”) shall be comprised of members involved (in any capacity) in same or similar activity (Gardeners, Herders, Artisans, Education, etc.). Each WG needs to appoint one of its members to be a member of the Excom. This election can not be changed for 6 months.

WG that has more than 6 members can be split to 2 WGs, by concentrating on a more specific areas (Pumpkin Growers, Veggie People, Annuals, etc.). WG that has more than 9 members must be split according to the same principles. WG that has less than 3 members must be merged with an appropriate WG.

Each member of BSF (except for the Directors and Officers) must belong to at least one WG. Members involved or interested in more than one activity can (and are encouraged) to be members of up to 3 different WGs.

WGs shall decide all questions falling within its jurisdiction by a simple majority vote.

### **Mentoring program**

Experienced farmers that we have on site and around it is one of our most valuable resources. Yes, they learned some of their skills from people who think chemicals can solve any problem but they also learned a lot of other skills from people who were farming before the chemicals or from the nature herself, from experience and years observations. Take what you need and throw away what doesn't feel right. BSF will help to arrange apprenticeship with these farmers to BSF members who have proven that there are up to the task.

### **Gatherings**

There will be a potluck lunch or dinner 8 times a year, which all members should try to attend. These are really important to keep everyone on the same page, to network and to find opportunities to help each other. They can be short and businesslike or long and combined with a cookout or a bonfire - that's up to us. Important thing is that there should be a periodic meeting that everyone attends. How else will you learn that a new member has something that you've been looking all over for?

Specific date and time for each gathering will be chosen by participants as it suits them but they will be conducted roughly around the following dates: Feb 2, Mar 21, May 1, June 21, Aug 2, Sep 24, Oct 31 and Dec 21. These dates were chosen because they're about 6 weeks apart from each other, which is a good interval for the updates and such. They are also

markers for seasonal changes (equinoxes, solstices, etc.) and as farmers we should always keep the sun cycles and other natural cycles in mind.

## ***Community Around Us***

### **Advisory Council**

Advisory Council consists of members of local community, healthy food enthusiasts and people involved with the final products of BSF. Board of Directors and Excom may ask Advisory Council for feedback about their proposed decisions. Advisory Council may also offer suggestions anytime they feel it will help.

### **Engaging the community**

[Local extension office, Boy/girl scouts, FFA - the program will be started when demonstration site and educational program are active; local trash pick up and recycling service - the program will be started when there is person to implement it ]

### **Tours**

Every month there is a free public tour of BSF. Usually it is on the same date as a monthly class, from 10 to 11:30. The tour showcases advanced agricultural techniques used by BSF and its partners and natural beauty and diversity of the site. The tours are given on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of every month, unless a sufficient number of people asks for it to be held on some other day.

Private tours cost \$100 for up to 10 people and should be reserved 2 weeks in advance. They are conducted on any day of the week and will be focused on the area of interest of those attending.

### **Classes**

There are monthly classes, usually free and entry-level on all aspects of growing food. From time to time, there are also more advanced paid classes and workshops.

### **Demonstration site**

### **Consultations and speaking engagements**