

## **Cornell Cooperative Extension Tompkins County**

### **2026 Application for CCE Tompkins Agroforestry Apprenticeship**

Thank you for your interest in Cornell Cooperative Extension Tompkins County's 2026 Agroforestry Apprenticeship Program! Up to 25 apprenticeship applicants will be selected to take part in a training course, and of those, up to 10 will be hired directly by collaborating host nurseries or tree planting operations for in-field apprenticeships following the training course in 2026.

The training course will include 4-6 hours/week of live, online coursework and 5-7 hours/week of independent study, and will be offered over 8 weeks in February and March 2026. During the training course period, Host tree nursery and tree planting operations will select 10 apprentices for their sites. Selection and hiring will be done directly by each Host, who will then offer paid on-the-job training from March through some or all of the 2026 growing season. On-the-job training will range from 150-250 hours total, depending on the needs and capacity of each Host operation. Details of the employment arrangement, including start and end dates, rate of pay, and total hours offered will be mutually determined by each Host and the Apprentice(s) they hire.

Successful applicants will be at an early point in their agroforestry career, or interested in shifting careers; interested in serving others through tree planting or tree production, not just planting on their own land; and committed to a season of hard work, reflection, and skill-building. Successful applicants will be informed of their slot in the training course by December 23, 2025. The course will include a few in-person field days that involve on-site visits in upstate New York to observe agroforestry in practice, to be announced closer to class time. Some funding will be available to support in-state travel for these site visits.

The intention of the program is to introduce participants to the basic skills needed to work in the agroforestry sector in New York State, and to connect participants with stakeholders and potential employers in the sector. *Unfortunately given current demand, we do not expect that all eligible and qualified applicants will be accommodated in the program this year. Also note, this is the pilot year of the Agroforestry Apprenticeship program.* Your patience, participation in the application process, and feedback will be most valuable as we revise the program for future years.

**To apply, please answer the following numbered questions in a separate document not to exceed three pages, and email that application document to Holly Payne by 11:59pm on Thursday, December 4th, 2025.** Applications will be accepted as Word documents, PDFs, or in Google Docs. Questions? Please contact Holly Payne: [hp67@cornell.edu](mailto:hp67@cornell.edu) or via text (607) 229-3540.

## **Application**

1. Name (first and last)
2. Email address
3. Phone number (specify if you prefer text only)
4. Required experience: *At least one* of the following:

At least three months of relevant hands-on experience in farming, forestry, greenhouse work, landscaping, or related work - OR -

At least three months of experience working outdoors in another capacity (e.g. trail work, outdoor education, road construction, roofing, on a fishing vessel, etc) AND at least one academic class in a relevant field (e.g. horticulture, forestry, agronomy, crop production, plant science, or related fields).

Desired experience: Experience managing plants; understanding of soil management principles. Applicants are not expected to have formal or extensive training, or experience in nursery management or tree-planting.

Required capabilities: Apprentices should be able to:

- work outside in all types of weather, tolerate insects
- work repetitive tasks in bursts that may include long hours
- shovel soil/mulch/woodchips, push wheelbarrows, lift containers, move fences, etc.
- engage with soil composting processes: work with food scraps, manure
- in some cases, work with pastured livestock
- use sharp or heavy tools such as pruners, clippers, sledge hammers, post hole diggers, etc.

Apprentices will also need to provide their own waterproof work clothing and appropriate footwear.

Given the requirements above, please explain how your experience and skills align with this early-career training program. **Please note: If you are only interested in the training course and do not wish to be considered for an apprentice placement, please make that clear in your response here.**

5. Depending on the Host operation, there may be other types of challenges that apprentices should prepare for. Do you have any allergies, physical constraints, or other accommodations that a Host operation would need to be aware of?
6. What concrete skills would you hope to learn during your field placement?

7. What town, county, and state do you currently live in? (or if you anticipate moving in the near future, where will you be living in March 2026?) Note that all Host placements in this program are in New York State.
8. In order to enable a successful Apprenticeship, Hosts are responsible for helping Apprentices find basic housing options. Hosts are *not required to provide* Apprentices with housing or transportation. Some potential Host sites may be located within commuting distance from your residence, while others would require relocation.
  - Do you have reliable transportation? How far would you regularly be able to travel?
  - Describe your interest in, and ability to, relocate for an Apprentice placement.
9. Learning Styles:
  - What are your strengths and challenges when learning new systems and tasks?
  - What kinds of learning do you enjoy?
  - If you don't understand an instruction, are you more comfortable asking for help or learning by trial and error?Please share any learning accommodations you might need.
10. Are you fluent in English (reading, writing, speaking)? What other languages do you speak fluently (if any)?
11. Some agroforestry tasks benefit from active teamwork and others benefit from people who like working alone. How would you approach these disparate tasks? Do you have a preference for one approach or the other?
12. Communication is important. As everyone knows, working with people can occasionally involve misunderstandings or sometimes disagreement. Describe a time (whether real or hypothetical) when you had to work out a misunderstanding with an employer or a team member.
  - What part did you play in resolving it?
  - What are key communication styles and strategies that would allow you to successfully navigate challenges like this?
13. Please estimate your availability for part-time, interactive, online classwork during February-March 2026.
  - What would be your earliest start date in February?
  - How many hours/week and how many weeks are you available during this two-month time period?
  - Any other timing considerations that the coordination team should be aware of?
14. We understand that apprentices may have outside employment or other commitments during the field placement period.
  - Please estimate your availability for a field placement during the 2026 growing season. What months, weeks, and general hours could you be available between March - October, 2026?

- What is your preferred duration for a 250-hour field placement? (e.g. 2 months at 29 hours per week? 6 months at 10 hours per week? etc.)
- Describe the timing of any competing commitments during the 2026 growing season. Note that many Host sites will want apprentices on-site in spring and/or fall when nursery and tree-planting operations are busiest.

15. Please include in your application the following attestation:

All answers on this application are accurate and I attest to their truthfulness. I understand that if I am selected, I have the required time to dedicate to this course and the field placement that follows, and I will be responsible for my own lodging and transport during any field placement.

Please note:

Participants who fully participate in the live, online course will receive a \$3,000 stipend to facilitate their ability to engage with the coursework and the time commitment required.

Rates of pay for on-the-job training will be determined by each Host site, and will be 80-100% of the local living wage rate, determined by the [MIT Living Wage Calculator](#).

Apprentices will not be employees of CCE Tompkins during the apprenticeship program, and the program is not a Registered Apprenticeship Program through either the United States Department of Labor or the New York State Department of Labor.

Thank you for your application! Deadline is **Thursday, December 4th, 2025**. We look forward to reading it!

Questions? Contact Holly Payne at **hp67@cornell.edu** or via text **(607) 229-3540**.