

## Green Edge Gardens; Farm Crew Profile

Lisa McKinnie

Age: 27

Hometown: Cleveland, Ohio



Q: What brought you to Green Edge Gardens?

A: I worked for several years in retail greenhouses, focusing mostly on high-end flowers and landscape design. I fell in love with horticulture but felt a serious lack of purpose. Learning to farm was a long term goal of mine, rooted in my desire to hone skills that allow for self-sufficiency and an ever-decreasing dependence on corporate America. I showed up in Athens during an extremely transitional point in my life and decided to take the leap. As luck would have it, there was a part-time opening at Green Edge which eventually turned into full-time work.

Q: What do you value most about your experience here?

A: It's honest work. It's work that has a direct and positive impact on my community, and that's something that is critical for me. I find a lot of purpose in being able to contribute to building healthy

## Green Edge Gardens; Farm Crew Profile

alternatives to Big Agriculture and working within a farming model that promotes both a healthy local food economy as well as sustainable environmental practices. These types of transitions are only becoming more and more vital to our survival, and I'm grateful that I've developed a skill-set here that will allow me to teach others the basics of growing food for both themselves and their community no matter where I end up. Plus I get to work for, and with, some really wonderful and inspiring people at the same time.

Q: What do you find to be to most rewarding part of farm work? The most difficult?

A: The connection that farming has fostered between myself and the natural world is something that I will always carry with me. I've always been drawn outdoors, hiking and camping in my free time, but working 365 in the elements has brought that to a whole new level. On the flip side, the biggest challenge for me personally has been the physical exhaustion that comes with year-round farming. When you're out all day in ninety-degree heat trying to keep crops watered or pulling heavy covers on freezing winter days it's hard not to just go home and shut down. Learning to practice self-care and making sure I do not lose sight of my other priorities in life takes constant effort.

Q: Where do you plan to go from here?

A: I'm planning to move out to the Washington coast sometime in late Spring. There are a lot of roads diverging for me right now, so I can't say with any certainty if I will always farm professionally, but I do know that growing food for myself and my family will always be a valued part of my life. This past year spent at Green Edge has been one of incredible growth, both personally and in my work, and I'm excited to see what comes next.