



Merry Lea

*Environmental Learning Center
of Goshen College*

Exploring Merry Lea Teaching Farm 6th - 8th

Program Description

Merry Lea Teaching Farm is a unique edible ecosystem where students taste their way to an understanding of humans, farm and habitat connections. Students delve into soil ecosystems, search for pollinators at work and meet our animals living at the farm. Making apple cider provides students a memorable example of how food can be processed before we consume it.

Program Objectives

Students will learn how:

- Food comes from farms
- Farms are ecosystems! (Communities of plants and animals)
- Farms are managed by people, who are also an important part of the farm.

Program Outline

*Activities may vary based on group size and length of trip

1. Farm Stations: Students rotate through different stations focused on the importance each place plays on the farm.
 - Animal Barn
 - Garden Exploration
 - Farms as an Ecosystem
 - Compost
2. Trail Activities: Students stop and make observations about an ecosystem while on the trail (wetland, forest, prairie).
3. Cider Pressing
4. Group Game

Vocabulary

- Ecosystem
- Producer
- Decomposer
- Consumer
- Processed

Quick Facts ←

Season Fall: September - November

Grades 6th - 8th

Program 4 hours

Maximum # of Students 80 Students

Standards Correlation

LS2.B: Cycles of Matter and Energy Transfer in Ecosystems: Food webs are models that demonstrate how matter and energy is transferred between producers, consumers, and decomposers as the three groups interact within an ecosystem. Transfers of matter into and out of the physical environment occur at every level. Decomposers recycle nutrients from dead plant or animal matter back to the soil in terrestrial environments or to the water in aquatic environments. The atoms that make up the organisms in an ecosystem are cycled repeatedly between the living and nonliving parts of the ecosystem. (MS-LS2-3)

LS2.C: Ecosystem Dynamics, Functioning, and Resilience: Ecosystems are dynamic in nature; their characteristics can vary over time. Disruptions to any physical or biological component of an ecosystem can lead to shifts in all its populations. (MS-LS2-4)

LS2.A: Interdependent Relationships in Ecosystems: Similarly, predatory interactions may reduce the number of organisms or eliminate whole populations of organisms. Mutually beneficial interactions, in contrast, may become so interdependent that each organism requires the other for survival. Although the species involved in these competitive, predatory, and mutually beneficial interactions vary across ecosystems, the patterns of interactions of organisms with their environments, both living and nonliving, are shared. (MS-LS2-2)