



BLACKWOOD
EDUCATIONAL LAND INSTITUTE

Farm Philosophy

"No one has yet charted a roadmap to a bright ecological future. If there were one, we would be solving our problems. Only innovative thinkers – those who are willing to venture away from the obvious to try what seems to be wrong or impossible – will solve our future issues.

"It is my burning desire to offer young people the encouragement to experiment with what some might consider wrong or impossible, a safe place where they can try, fall, get up, and give it another try.

"We do that at Blackwood Land when we give a child a trowel, a kitchen knife, a bucket of scraps for the chickens, a pair of wellies and a raincoat. Here they get to experiment with food, from seed to table to compost. They are asked to help care for the living creatures on the farm. They get to run in the rain, play in the mud, nap in a hammock, and immerse themselves in nature. Then they fall in love with this magnificent world. " – Cath Conlon, founder and CEO, Blackwood Educational Land Institute

This is a bold and ambitious declaration. And, since our founding in 1991, this vision has inspired visitors, volunteers, and staff at Blackwood Land to seek a bright ecological future for our families.

We teach where food comes from, how it works to nourish our bodies, how we can develop a heartfelt reverence for the land, and how agriculture is more than just a business. It is a life-support system!

We are committed to practicing and teaching resilient farming practices to grow good food. We know the secret to producing healthful food is in the soil. We never compromise our soil quality. We integrate rich compost and crop rotation systems to continually enrich the soil, which then delivers nutritious produce. We use sustainable and dynamic growing methods, so our farm doesn't need chemical fertilizers or pesticides.

Because Blackwood Land is a nonprofit education center and a farm, we are always experimenting with new growing methods and new types of crops to be grown (even ginger and bananas!).

We are essentially a laboratory. We are dedicated to improving our techniques to achieve a truly resilient, sustainable farming enterprise. We help people discover and appreciate the land and water that gives us our good food.

At Blackwood Land, you can count on us for:

- No synthetic chemicals
- Soil and crop diversity
- Self-sufficiency through the implementation of a closed-loop system
- Raising heritage animals suited to our location
- The ethical and humane treatment of animals
- Continually seeking to improve taste and increase the foods' regional viability
- Utilizing low-energy resources as much as possible

That commitment is rewarded with harvested produce that is some 40 percent more nutritious than conventional produce purchased at grocery stores. And it's tastier!

Because the land is a living system, we respect it by only working a portion of it. The majority of land does its work quietly, supporting the functions of various ecosystems. For example, the coastal prairie ecosystem supports bees, which in turn sustain the crops. The birds that frequent the gardens at the end of summer feed on the sunflower seeds, encouraging the natural fertilization of the coastal prairie's field of wildflowers.

Blackwood Educational Land Institute reminds us of humanity's intrinsic bond with the land. It teaches the interconnectivity of all living things. It suggests that great things can happen when we realize that this interdependence extends to our families and our communities as well.