

Developing a Green Thumb - Cultivating a Lifestyle of Organic Farming

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For many, organic food is seen simply as the food in grocery stores. But for Ed, this is a lifestyle that he has grown to love. As part of our REEU program, we were given the opportunity to visit their organic farm outside of Athens and get to not only discuss his experiences with organic farming but also to get hands on and help them with their crops to better understand the first step in how organic foods get to the hands of customers.

Organic farming has been on the rise recently due to consumer's increasing desires to have all natural produce and their fears of GMOs have combined to create a massive movement not only in the US but around the world for organic. During our discussions with Ed, we asked him what motivates him the most into farming organic compared to the conventional methods. His main point was that he could not personally stand the practices of using dangerous pesticides on food that he would not only feed to his family, but also share at farmer's markets to other families. During our visit we could see the heart and soul in each plot that they grew. Each one seemed to be maintained almost completely by hand and we were even able to help with weeding their peanut plots.

Being able to work with Ed's team to maintain his crops and experience how he and his family market their products at the local farmers market was very eye-opening in that we were able to see how organic farmers like Ed make organic farming more of a lifestyle than a hobby. This immersive experience shined light on how much passion organic farmers have for the land they live on, the crops they grow, and the people they serve. Most people understand how physically taxing farming is, but not a lot of people understand how mentally taxing farming can be as well. The knowledge we gained from this REEU and from Sundance Farms have given us all a greater understanding of agriculture, and a greater sense of respect for those who make agriculture their lifestyle.

