



AMERICAN CLIMATE LEADERSHIP AWARDS

Zumwalt Acres

zumwaltacres.org

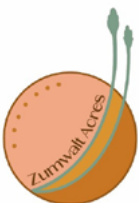
This guide offers a successful stepwise model for you to replicate in your community. It is part of a series featuring the finalists of ecoAmerica's 2023 American Climate Leadership Awards.

OVERVIEW

Zumwalt Acres transitions industrial farmland into regenerative and community-oriented landscapes. We're a hub for climate-smart agricultural research and serve a critical role in our local food ecosystem. We train the next generation of growers – which are more diverse and justice-minded than current Midwestern farmers – to fight climate change, food insecurity, and environmental degradation. Our apprentices (age 18-27) live, learn, and farm together to build a hopeful and meaningful community amidst a world of climate despair.

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

1. **Get rooted in your identity.** Own your personal history and the histories of the communities to which you belong. Pay attention to pieces of your identity that meaningfully translate into how you can show up in the world. For us, that looks like getting curious about how our Jewish and queer identities appear in our agricultural work.
2. **Engage heartily in mutual aid, solidarity, and coalition building work.** Recognize, leverage, and generously share the privileges your team does hold. Ask for help from others when needed. From renting neighboring farmers' machinery to using existing environmental networks to recruit our apprentices, we have leaned on others doing aligned work every step of the way. Take inventory of your unique position as embedded members in many communities.
3. **Learn your ecosystem.** Seek to understand the different environments you inhabit — the natural environment, the built environment, the social environment, the political environment, and more. Considering the history of the ecosystem and identifying harms that must be repaired can guide collaborations to meet these needs.



4. **Decide what to grow by thinking about who you are growing for and why.** For example, we make our crop plan with feedback from members of our local food pantry and our farm emphasizes culturally meaningful Jewish foods, like horseradish and honey. If you are growing plants, consider what will bolster the health and resilience of the ecosystem.
5. **Invest in young people and empower them to be leaders.** Young people have been raised in the face of climate catastrophe, political turmoil, and a global pandemic. They are better prepared than anyone to confront environmental degradation, and they deserve agency in building the uncertain future that they are inheriting. As a completely youth-led organization, we're certain that young people can be trusted to make meaningful change!
6. **Ask questions, seek answers, and share results.** Research is an incredibly powerful tool for systemic change when used critically and with great intentionality. Our conscientious approach has led us to new audiences and improved the scientific understanding of our practices, but we work hard to remember the inherent biases our team brings to research.
7. **Find common ground in creative coalitions.** Our annual barbecue brings together researchers, conventional farmers, community members, and young Jewish people. Identifying shared goals can forge meaningful relationships across diverse communities.
8. **Build time to navigate the complexities of justice work.** Engage in ongoing education of yourself and your organization. As a farm, we set aside weekly time for "Context Conversations" that offer critical dialogues on the social and political dimensions of our work, such as the colonization, racism, ableism, and sexism that pervades agriculture in the United States. Additionally, we mindfully choose guest speakers and field trips for our apprentices that can provide depth to their understanding of agricultural and food injustices.
9. **Recognize that you are never the first person to do something.** We are located on the traditional unceded homelands of the Kiiikaapoi (Kickapoo), Peoria, Kaskaskia, Bodéwadmiakiwen (Potawatomi), Myaamia, and Očhéthi Šakówiŋ peoples. Recognize and honor the Indigenous history of regenerative practices. Explore how they can inform your work.

Zumwalt Acres is an ACLA 2023 Finalist. For more information and replication guides, go to ecoAmerica.org

ecoAmerica's American Climate Leadership Awards (ACLA) recognizes, rewards, and shares best practices on climate change advocacy and action nationwide. ACLA provides \$175,000 annually in recognition of real climate leadership. Individuals and organizations selected as finalists have achieved demonstrated success in engaging a broader diversity of Americans for climate action at local, regional, and national levels, in ways that are replicable, while prioritizing diversity, inclusion, and justice..

