



School tours in the orchard

Posted by [Shane Patrick](#)

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[Shane Patrick](#)

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September 01, 2022 02:20PM

Hi Gang,

Registered: 2 years ago

Posts: 22

We have been approached by a couple of schools about tours in the orchard. We want to accommodate, excite the wee ones and spread the good news about ugly apples and radical biodiversity. On the flip side, it's kinda busy this time of year, the list of things that won't get accomplished during the season grows. I'm curious how others in the group handle this.

Do you charge a fee and if so, what's reasonable per head or per hour? 20-30 K-third graders plus chaperones. An hour to one and a half seems about right for those attention spans. The orchard is a new venture for us, our only revenue stream and the black ink remains in the well on the other side of the ledger.

Maine has laws protecting agri-tourism and our general liability policy provides protection. We press and sell untreated cider and could give samples (teachers and chaperones would know that ahead of time and could get parents to sign off as part of the general waiver).

Thoughts?

Shane Patrick

Pleasant Pond Orchard

Richmond, Maine 5b

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[Todd Parlo](#)

[Re: School tours in the orchard](#)

September 02, 2022 07:42PM

Registered: 10 years ago

Posts: 301

Shane, this comes up constantly here. We always do some free things yearly but here is my advice when requests come at a busy time: take yourself out of the equation. You do that by either actually or conceptually hiring staff to take care of the field trip. For instance if I am busy and have to hire a couple of employees for 4 hours it would look something like this: 25 (wages/etc) x 8 hrs + 25.00 in supplies (giving apples, cider, etc.) comes to a cost of 225.00. Don't fool yourself- a 1.5 hour trip is going to be an easy for in prep, distractions, cleanup, and chatting. Since charging for such things, especially with cute little kiddies, gets uncomfortable for all of us this approach makes it easier. Do you expect the employees to do it for free? Do you expect your family to? Is the teacher doing this on their day off? So, my advice is to do the occasional thing for free, especially for those groups having a tough time of it (schools have budgets). What the community really needs is a farmer selling them healthy food. This year I gave a free tour to a handful of families/groups who have supported us, and charged for a couple of school groups (including a college group). This paid for employees- we do not as a rule make money on these- they are all break even. I would also encourage, if there is a lot of interest, joining multiple groups in one day- the setup, employee help, and cleanup, all happen once making it easier. Another tip is to invite the parents of those kids there- especially during any free events- as they will be the ones possibly coming back to purchase your goods. In this sense it opens up the idea of a "loss leader" approach to, well, being nice. Another nice move is to post the charge you have for tours- something we now do. This way a set price for the distraction is made, and whoever wants to come can sign up. In my experience most schools, garden groups, families, etc. understand how busy we all are and are more than happy to pay to help out the effort.

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