

## **Shane J. LaBrake**

Shane J. LaBrake is an Independent Agricultural Consultant, Trainer and Teacher based in Accokeek, MD. Shane works with a wide variety of clients and students who are interested in advancing skills and enhancing the productivity and profitability of their sustainable agriculture enterprises. Shane places a strong emphasis on learning, safety, efficiency, and disciplined productivity as keys to success and profitability in agriculture.

The internationally acclaimed architect and designer William McDonough says that “Design is the first signal of human intention.” Shane works with clients to clarify in precise language their intentions for their farming ventures. He conducts a careful inventory of all of the farm resources: the human skills and knowledge base; the infrastructure, including buildings, machinery, roads, etc.; the physical resources of soils, water, proximities to markets, etc.; and the client’s financial resources. Once intention and available resources are clarified, Shane helps his clients create effective designs for their farming operations that enhance the overall well-being of the whole farm entity.

Shane has practically an entire life's work in food and agriculture. Prior to working independently, he worked for the Accokeek Foundation, where he was hired in 1995 to create a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) project at the Foundation's Robert Ware Straus Ecosystem Farm. Shane managed the farm and the CSA program from 1995 – 2004, and again in 2006.

In 1996, Shane began to develop a “land-based training” program designed to further develop the skills and knowledge of individuals planning to operate their own small-scale organic vegetable farms. Through 2006, 30 apprentices worked alongside Shane at the Accokeek Foundation's Center for Land-Based Training. Beginning in 1999, Shane has participated in an ongoing series of forums on new and beginning farmer training, on-farm mentoring, and appropriate scale equipment and mechanization, sponsored by the New England Small Farm Institute (NESFI).

Since 1994, Shane has presented workshops at many sustainable agriculture conferences in the Northeastern States. He is well known for the 2-day tractor and farm machinery operation and maintenance workshops that he has created, as well as classes and workshops on organic gardening. He has also presented many times on CSA, soils, new farmer training and garlic production. Shane has served on many boards and committees, and was one of the founders of the Northeast On-Farm Mentor Network.

Prior to moving to Maryland, Shane created and managed The Community Farm Project for the Food Bank of Central New York, near Syracuse, NY. He also worked for many years as manager of the Syracuse Real Food Coop.

Shane is a native of Northern New York State where he operated a market garden and roadside farm stand with his father and brother for six years beginning when he was nine years old. He spent 18 months living and working in Venezuela - initially as an exchange student – and he is fluent in Spanish. He majored in Geography at Syracuse University.