

Thank you for your interest in the Earthen Floors Workshop being offered this August! This letter is being shared to offer a few more details of the project, provide expectations from/for students, structure the reservation process for holding your spot, and a few more basic points of clarification.

**The Class Specifics:**

August 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>. Class will run from 6:00pm-9:00pm Friday the 5<sup>th</sup> and 9:00am-5:30pm Saturday and Sunday (7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup>). The class is being held at Rolling Acres Organic Farm and the home of Denise O'Brien and Larry Harris. The floor will be laid in the new strawbale home being built on their property on the North Side of Atlantic, Iowa about halfway between Omaha, Nebraska and Des Moines, Iowa.

**The project:**

A weekend intensive Earthen Floors workshop where we will be installing a finished floor. The floor will be made from clay soil gathered and processed on-site, sand from the local quarry, and Iowa grown straw fibers. The floor will be oiled with a hardening oil after it is polished and dry to provide decades of use.

During the workshop, participants will learn the fundamentals of earthen concrete recipes (applicable to earth based plasters, cob, adobe bricks, and or course earthen floors!) as we process, refine and apply floor mix. The class will largely be hands on with periodic lectures peppered in. Class begins Friday evening with a meal and a conversation on earthen floors and their merits. Saturday and Sunday will be application days as we go through each step of the process on floor mixing and application techniques. Participants are encouraged to come prepared to work for the most thorough educational experience, however, we realize not all participants may be in a position to do so and we respect those who wish to attend for want of exposure to the technique.

The physical demands of this job can be real, although, breaking up mixes into smaller quantities and taking periodic breaks can help ease the strains on the body. We will do our best to present ergonomic ways of doing the work to ensure longevity both of the earthen floor itself, but also for the installer! That said, participants are encouraged to bring PPE such as ear protection, closed toed shoes, a good dust mask/respirator (or both), gloves that provide some dexterity, and either knee pads or a moveable gardening style kneeling pad. You are also welcome to bring your own wooden float and steel float/trowel but we will have these tools available for those who do not own them.

In the age of covid, there are a few logistical challenges of meeting in an intimate gathering where participants are in close contact with one another. Whether recently recovered with natural antibodies, or vaccinated with or without boosters... everyone's story is slightly different in how they are protecting themselves and others during these challenging times. We are non- judgemental about the way you choose to care for yourself during these times but folks that chose to attend are responsible for their own comfort and safety.

In regards to meals and lodging... August in Iowa is traditionally hot, sometimes very hot. There is lodging available nearby at some hotels that are fairly inexpensive, but we do have plenty of space for pitching tents or parking campers at the farm where the build is taking place. There may be the potential to sleep in the main house where the hosts live, or the converted schoolbus that usually lives on site. Students should discuss their plans with me ahead of time to make sure everyone has the proper expectations of amenities. For meals, we are asking that breakfasts and lunches be provided by the students. There will be freezer and fridge space available on site for participants to store their food and a small 3-burner gas stove available for cooking and water heating. We will provide dinner each

evening at the completion of work for the day. Special dietary needs should be addressed in the questionnaire below.

On a note of class tuition and payment. A sliding scale has been set for this course on the range of \$175-\$400. We know the high end of this scale may sound steep for a 2 ½ day class but we value the course at a cost of \$300. The reason the price is offered on a sliding scale is to subsidize folks who may have less money but are interested in attending. Historically, we have had a good mix of folks paying on the high end and low end of the scale which balances things out and allows us to hold the course while ensuring the opportunity is open to a broad demographic of interested parties . In addition, we seek to offer scholarships and sometimes free tuition to a student or two who has interest in attending but is limited in their financial ability to do so. Those who pay on the high end of the scale allow us to do this. That said, the scale is offered for a reason, and it is not designed to shame you into paying a higher amount if you find yourself not financially able to. Please provide what you can and if you are in a more desperate financial situation, please contact me directly to speak about possible work exchange or financial scholarship.

In order to reserve your space, we are asking for a \$100 down payment, although you may pay in full at the time of enrollment if you'd like to. This down payment will be refundable up until July 22nd, two weeks before the workshop begins, at which point you will sacrifice the down payment if you drop out... obviously exceptions can be made for emergency situations but we do this to ensure a serious group of participants as well as provide us room to fill your space from a waiting list should you decide you are unable to attend. If you are feeling ill days ahead of the workshop, please take a Covid test and ensure you are not contagious before coming to this intimate group setting. A full refund will be offered to anyone who comes down sick days before the class begins. Payments can be made via paypal or check. Paypal can be sent to [jimschalles@yahoo.com](mailto:jimschalles@yahoo.com) Checks may be sent to Tallgrass Hearth and Home, Care of Jim Schalles, 3117 Craig Ave, Omaha, NE 68112.

At the time of registration, we are asking participants return this questionnaire. The receipt of answers to these questions as well as down payment guarantees your spot will be reserved. Any further questions can be sent to [tallgrasshearthandhome@gmail.com](mailto:tallgrasshearthandhome@gmail.com) or contact me by phone/text at 402-981-1554. Thanks for your interest! Looking forward to this class!

### **Questionnaire:**

How did you hear about this course?

What experience, if any, do you have with construction, particularly natural/earthen building?

What are you hoping to gain from this course?

Do you have any physical limitations that we should be aware of?

Do you have any dietary restrictions that you would like accommodated?

Thank you so much for your interest! Get in touch soon, this class with its small size of 8 looks to fill up in short order.

-Jim