

Sourwood Forest Residency

Frequently Asked Questions:

A letter from Judy Strang, director of Sourwood Forest

Dear future resident at Sourwood Forest,

At the end of a long gravel road in Amherst County, Virginia, Sourwood Forest is a place to connect deeply with the natural world. From May through September, writers and creators share a spacious, eclectic home on sixty acres of untrailed forest, where the nearest human neighbor is a mile away. The setting includes diverse perennial gardens and small pastures where four goats roam. We hope you can stay with us and nurture your creativity through quiet immersion in this rare and entrancing place!

When are applications due and when will I hear back?

- The calendar fills based on the acceptance of residents via a rolling application period.
- Your submitted application form will be answered within two weeks by an email indicating availability and further steps.
- Residencies are awarded on a first-come, first-served basis, so we recommend you apply well in advance of desired dates.
- Those who apply early have a greater chance of getting the choice of dates they prefer.

Who is the best fit for a Sourwood Forest residency?

- Sourwood Forest is best suited to writers and creators who work with natural materials and need little indoor working space.
- This residency is for those who are: curious about the natural world and sensitive to their entanglements within it; feel their immersion in the non-human world as necessary to their artistic endeavors; would like the chance to interact with a small group of other creatives during their residency.
- The ideal Sourwood Forest resident is someone who is interested in solitude and nature, and being part of a small community.

What does it cost?

- Fees are based partly on the needs and interests of the residents. Basic fees range from \$45-\$75/night, depending on length of stay and how many residents are here. There is a 3 night minimum and lowest rates are for stays of 10 days or longer. Monthly rates are determined on a case-by-base basis. A deposit of half the fee is required to secure your spot, and the balance is due on the first day of the residency.
- Lower rates for all stays can be negotiated for working residents (see below).

Working resident option: We are happy to host residents at lower rates if they are willing to help with Sourwood Forest's Instagram, the gardens, yardwork, cooking/cleaning, or with goat care as a way to give back to the place that will be feeding their creative spirit. Work opportunities vary based on the time of year and number of residents. Outside work typically needs to happen during early morning hours. We have knowledge and experience to share with anyone who would enjoy the opportunity to learn about the nonhuman community here.

Do I need transportation?

- In most cases, yes!
- If you want to be here without a car, we may be able to arrange transport to and from the Lynchburg airport or the Lynchburg Amtrak station for an extra fee.
- It is generally difficult to get here by airplane, since the nearest airport in Lynchburg, VA is small.

What are the accommodations for residents?

Sleeping places: Two bedrooms on the ground floor are for residents, each of which has a queen bed. If a couple wants to apply, they would share a room.

- The larger bedroom has a chest of drawers, a closet, a small desk, desk chair, and a comfortable reading chair.
- The smaller bedroom has a queen bed, a chest of drawers, a bookshelf and a chair.
- Occupants of the two bedrooms share a common area between the bedrooms, which contains a small table, two chairs, and a small refrigerator.

Bathroom: There is a shared full bath for residents located seven steps above the bedroom level, near the house's front door.

Laundry: The "mud room" (between the front patio door and the flights of stairs that go either down to the basement or up to the main floor) is the main entrance and a shared area, with washer and utility sink.

- The house does not have a dryer, but there are two standing racks to dry clothes as well as the option to use the laundry line that is occasionally strung in the living room.
- Be aware that Sourwood Forest aims to conserve water by limiting and/or combining wash loads, as possible, and we will supply environmentally friendly detergent.

Climate control: The house is air conditioned by way of several individual mini-split units on the main and top floors.

- There is no personal climate control in the resident bedrooms.
- Small fans are provided, and the basement stays comfortable because of its location partly underground and the passive solar features of the house.
- A whole-house dehumidifier keeps the basement at a humidity level low enough to deter the presence of mold.

- For most of the summer, outdoor night temperatures are not much lower than the house temperature, and humidity outside is significantly higher. For the sake of whole-house climate control, opening windows is limited by the outdoor humidity from early-June through mid-September. *In other words, if you must have an open window in your bedroom or need a super cool sleeping environment, apply for May or October only.*

Are meals provided?

- We have some breakfast basics on hand for everyone: A selection of teas and coffees, various “milks,” honey and sugar, herbal iced tea, various breads, jams, butter, and olive oil.
- We provide a shared dinner once or twice a week, depending on the number of residents. Residents are responsible for feeding themselves, but because of the shared kitchen, with a bit of planning, you can economize through shared cooking and meals. Residents will participate, to a negotiated degree, in shared meals, depending on their preferences.
- There’s space for residents’ individual food in the main kitchen’s refrigerator and basement freezer as well as space for non-refrigerated food in the kitchen and main floor pantry.
- We generally go out for groceries about once every 5 days, and are happy to take you along or purchase basic items for you. The closest grocery is 35 minutes away.

Will I be expected to interact with other residents?

- Opportunities for interaction with other residents will be decided upon collaboratively and will take whatever form decided by the residents.
- The expansive yards, gravel roads, plus the Sourwood Forest loop trail mean that you have many ways to separate yourself from human company.
- In the house, residents will have daily interactions with others since there are many shared spaces. Kitchen and common areas on the main floor of the house are shared spaces along with the yard and gardens.
- Resident bedrooms are on the ground floor and have significant privacy.

Where is Sourwood Forest and what is it like there?

- Sourwood Forest is on the 60-acre forested property of Judy and Scott Strang at the end of a long gravel road in western Amherst County, VA.
- It is 35 minutes from the town of Amherst, and within an hour of Lexington, Lynchburg, and Bedford.
- It is about an hour and a half from Charlottesville and Roanoke.
- There are a few residences along the 2-mile gravel road that ends just past our driveway, but none of these are all-year residents.
- Hiking and water-related activities abound since we are 20 minutes from the Blue Ridge Parkway and 25 minutes from the James River and Appalachian Trail.

- There is much to explore on foot, via gravel road or the Sourwood Forest Loop Trail (though we don't recommend the untrailed forest or fields because of the tick and snake factor in this part of Virginia).
- We keep paths mown through the pastures for walking about.
- May, early June, and late September on are the best times for being outside for much of the day.
- In summer, the best time to be outside is early morning and just after the sun drops behind the trees, bringing shade to the yard and pastures that makes walking among the gardens or visiting the goats pleasant.
- We have four old goats, none of whom are aggressive. We are happy to introduce residents to them. They are fenced out of the yard and gardens but their pastures are on three sides of the house.
- To be happy here, residents, need to be comfortable with the proximity of wildlife (especially insects) and tolerant of the typical hot and humid weather of a Virginia summer.

Other things to note:

- ➔ Wifi is available throughout the house and in the yard close to the house.
- ➔ Few cell phone carriers have a good signal here, but cell phones can be used in wifi calling mode.
- ➔ Wildlife is ubiquitous at Sourwood Forest, including insects and the occasional snake.
- ➔ Residents will be expected to follow good protocol for avoiding ticks and keeping them out of the house.
- ➔ The nearest urgent care is 35 minutes away; the nearest hospital is 45 minutes away.
- ➔ Residents need to be comfortable negotiating uneven ground and have no problem climbing stairs.

We hope you'll fill out an application form so we can talk about a residency at Sourwood Forest for you.