



High Tunnels: Frequently Asked Questions

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Q: What is a high tunnel?

High tunnels, or hoophouses, are unheated greenhouses that can help market gardeners extend their growing season so that they can improve the profitability of their farms.

Q: Where do I get the materials to build a high tunnel?

There are many sources for high tunnel materials. This can be a do-it-yourself project from the ground up, you can order a kit, or you can hire a greenhouse company to handle the construction. Some common suppliers include Gothic Arch Greenhouses, Haygrove Tunnels, FarmTek, and A.M. Leonard.

Q: Is it expensive?

High tunnels cost approximately \$0.75-1.50 sq ft. This includes plastic and the frame structure. As a rule of thumb, you should expect to pay at least an additional 25% for end-wall lumber, site preparation, water lines and other accessories.

Q: How does high tunnel production differ from field production?

High tunnels modify the environment to enhance crop growth, yield, and quality. Their primary function is to elevate temperatures a few degrees each day over a period of several weeks. They also provide wind and rain protection, soil warming, and in some instances control of insects, diseases, and predators such as rodents and birds. They enhance earliness and higher yields, improve quality, and may reduce the use of pesticides.

Q: What should I plant?

Since high tunnels provide a longer growing season than field production, consider crops that will have greater market value either early or late in the season. Some crops to consider include: tomatoes, peppers, melons, strawberries, and cut flowers.

Q: When should I plant?

Plant crops in the fall for early spring harvest and in the spring for fall harvest.



Q: Where can I get more information?

☀ www.hightunnels.org is a clearinghouse of information including site planning and construction, suppliers, seed sources, and crop information.

☀ Penn State Center for Plasticulture provides invaluable information on everything you need to know about growing in high tunnels and on plastic mulch.

<http://plasticulture.cas.psu.edu/>

☀ Mississippi State University

Dr. John Braswell frequently hosts seminars and workshops for growers about season extension and growing for local markets.

Dr. Christine Coker is currently conducting trials in 2 high tunnels at the Beaumont Horticultural Unit in Perry County, MS. A Field Day is hosted at the station each spring, but visitors are always welcome.