

GROWING IN HIGH TUNNELS



Summer cucumber trellis



Winter row cover

MCC STUDENT FARM HIGH TUNNELS

This North Tunnel is automated using electricity. A thermostat controls the exhaust fan and the roll-down sides which close when cold and open when hot. We adjust the temperature parameters seasonally.

The South Tunnel (to your right) has no electricity. The sides are manually rolled open and closed as needed. The window louvers are controlled with wax pistons that warm to open and cool to close. The bottom portion of the end walls are removed in the summer and installed in colder weather.

HIGH TUNNELS ARE UNHEATED, PLASTIC-COVERED STRUCTURES PRIMARILY USED FOR GROWING VEGETABLES, FRUIT OR CUT FLOWERS

High tunnels serve to extend the growing season in the spring and the fall. Since the soil stays warmer and seldom freezes in the winter, direct seeding of crops can start much earlier than when growing outside. The tunnels are not frost proof but can offer protection from the cold, dry wind. High tunnels also make trellising easier with the built-in structure.

Temperature control: Tunnels use passive solar radiation so they heat up as the sun comes out. As the sun sets, they maintain a higher interior temperature as the soil releases some of the stored heat collected during the day. Row covers are used to help protect the plants in severe cold.

Water Control: Drip irrigation is used to conserve water usage and to keep the water off the leaves (to prevent disease). The drip lines are set up on timers and organic fertilizers can be added to the lines.

Pest Control: Scouting for disease and insect infestations is very important in a high tunnel. Severe infestations can occur without strong rainfalls and wind to help control the numbers, plus low air circulation can affect disease outbreaks. Ample space between plants and removing debris is important in keeping a disease and pest-free tunnel.



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