



Extending the Season

Western NY tends to have a short growing season. The soils stay frozen longer due to the long cold winter months. Your typical growing season last 158 days which isn't long enough for some plants such as broccoli or watermelons to fully develop.

This guide will show you a few ways to extend your growing season and increase your plant productivity.

Extended seasons are very important in cold weather climates such as Buffalo. Under GGB's lease you can not build a greenhouse or any structure with a permanent roof, but these removable options are allowed and will help you keep your soils warm.

Row Covers:

Row Covers can increase your growing season past the last frost date for a few weeks depending on the material used.

Light fabric row covers can be simply placed on top of the plants loosely to allow room for growth. Cover the edges of the fabric with soil to trap pests outside of the covers. This light fabric will allow for light, air, and water to pass through, but will need to be removed for pollinator plants once they fruit. The fabric allows for a few degrees of frost protection, but will only protect a few days past the first frost.

Heavy fabrics (plastics) work in a similar manner, but require a frame underneath the fabric to avoid crushing the plants. Also the cover will require venting or vent strips cut into the fabric during the hottest part of the day to avoid over heating the plants. This type of fabric blocks some light and will require hand watering. The benefits of a heavy fabric cover are the increased capture of heat at night which will give you a week or so of growing past the frost date.



Hoop Houses/Low Tunnels:

These season extenders need a few more tools and tricks to work. They need the frame created out of 1/2" pvc piping and tied down to the raised bed by either embedded rebar or an overlay of steel staples. The pvc pipes will be covered by plastic sheeting and held down by sand bags or recycled materials. The whole structure will be between 12-36 inches at the pinnacle of the hoop. The whole structure should be easily removable because most temporary hoop houses wouldn't survive a buffalo winter.

The hoop house can be used to extend both ends of your season. The plastic will trap in the heat and warm the soils before the last frost date and after the first frost date. Hoop houses are most commonly used for growing salad greens all season, but they can also be used for carrots, onions, tomatoes, and herbs. You can use a hoop house for vegetables that need to be pollinated like squash just remove the covering as soon as they start to flower.



Cold Frames:

Cold frames work similarly to a hoop house but are a little more permanent and take more materials to create. They are usually wooden frames with either glass or plastic sheeting.

*recycled windows work really well.

Cold frames will cost more to create and need to be left open on warm days to avoid too much heat being trapped inside. They also do not allow water into the frames, so you must be a diligent about watering.

