



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Oregon High Tunnel Initiative Q&A

What is a Seasonal High Tunnel?

Seasonal high tunnels are unheated, plastic-covered structures that provide an intermediate level of environmental protection and control compared to open field conditions and heated greenhouses. Easy to build, maintain, and move, they provide an energy-efficient way to extend the growing season, reduce or avoid use of pesticides and reduce run off and leaching of nitrogen.

A seasonal high tunnel does not have an electrical heating or ventilation system. The frame can either be metal or fiberglass. Plastic frames should be UV protected. High tunnels are usually covered with a single layer of plastic and are passively ventilated using roll-up side and end walls, which can be opened or removed.

What is a “manufactured” high tunnel?

To be eligible for the NRCS High Tunnel Initiative, the seasonal high tunnels must be purchased as a kit with warranties for wind and snow damage, and installation instructions from the company. Seasonal High Tunnels must be planned, designed and constructed in accordance with manufacturer’s recommendations.

Are there any limitations on how much financial assistance can I receive for a seasonal high tunnel?

Oregon NRCS has set a practice payment cap for the seasonal high tunnel practice. An applicant can apply for one or multiple seasonal high tunnels providing the sum total cost does not exceed the established practice payment cap.

If an applicant already has a high tunnel can they apply for another one?

If the applicant has not received funds from the Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative for the existing high tunnel(s) then they are eligible to apply for funding under this Initiative.

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Can an applicant receive funding for a Seasonal High Tunnel under multiple programs (EQIP, Organic or HTI)?

An applicant can sign up for a seasonal high tunnel under any program which it is offered. The applicant must make separate application for each program. However, the practice payment cap for the seasonal high tunnel practice applies to all programs in Oregon.

Can seasonal high tunnels be portable?

Yes, seasonal high tunnels can be portable, either physically moving the structure or having the structure on skids (if that is part of the manufacturer's specifications). If the plan is to utilize a portable seasonal high tunnel, a conservation plan must first be developed to identify the appropriate areas for the high tunnel to be placed.

Can a participant install a used seasonal high tunnel?

Used structures may be installed but need to be obtained from a commercial source. The used seasonal high tunnel must be planned, designed and constructed in accordance with manufacturer's recommendations and backed by a warranty from the manufacturer.

Can a participant in the Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative construct their own high tunnel?

No, structures need to be obtained from a commercial source. There are commercial sources in Oregon and nationally that can assist participants in selecting the right seasonal high tunnel.

Can a participant leave up the seasonal high tunnel all year?

In climate conditions where snow loads may damage the structure, the tunnel

cover should be removed at the end of the growing season. If the manufacturer's specification identifies higher load ratings then it is permissible to leave the cover on. Seasonal high tunnels in areas of low snow and ice loads may be used all year; check with the manufacturer for other conditions that may apply.

Are there limitations as to where this practice would apply?

Yes, the farm must have previously been growing food crops such as vegetables for local markets. Crops under a high tunnel must be grown in the natural soil profile or in raised beds. Crops grown on benches or pots will NOT be allowed. Because the intent of this practice is to support local food systems, the applicant needs to be actively involved in growing vegetables or small fruits for local markets.

This practice is not intended for the backyard gardener or orchardist. Eligible applications are only for agricultural enterprises actively engaged in agricultural production for more than home consumption of produce.

Can I use the seasonal high tunnel for small livestock (chickens, turkeys, hens etc.)?

No, seasonal high tunnels are for growing food crops only.

Can a participant install electricity to power heating or cooling units in the seasonal high tunnel?

No. Seasonal high tunnels are not greenhouses, but rather simple structures intended to maintain heat long enough to extend the growing season for crop production. The sides are capable of rolling up to provide cross ventilation so no additional fans need to be added.