



United States Department of Agriculture



Seasonal High Tunnel

Natural Resources Conservation Service

WHAT IS A HIGH TUNNEL?

A seasonal high tunnel is a non-engineered, polyethylene-covered structure that is at least six feet high and contains no electrical, ventilation, or heating systems. High tunnels modify the climate to create more favorable growing conditions for vegetables and other specialty crops grown in the natural soil beneath them.

High tunnels are typically constructed of metal bow frames covered with a single layer of polyethylene. A combination of roll-up or roll-down side vents provides ventilation. Generally, the end walls are framed to create doors and ventilation areas. A high tunnel structure covers several crop rows, is wide enough to allow crop growth to full maturity under the tunnel, and is tall enough to allow spraying, cultivation and harvest with the tunnel intact.

HOW CAN I RECEIVE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR A HIGH TUNNEL?

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative, offered through the agency's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), makes funding available to growers for high tunnel installations on their farms. To receive assistance, eligible producers must use commercially manufactured high tunnel kits. No electrical, heating or mechanical ventilation systems can be added.

NRCS offers financial assistance for all sizes of high tunnels. Both ends must have roll-up doors for ventilation. The high tunnel requires about 90 hours of manpower to install.



Produce from the high tunnel.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF A HIGH TUNNEL?

- Extended growing season because crops can be planted earlier
- Year round production if low row covers are used
- Crops protected from environmental extremes such as heavy rains, hail and wind
- Reduced insect and disease damage
- Reduced damage from birds and varmints
- Crops protected from frost and freezing temperatures
- Increased production from limited areas
- Locally grown produce conserves energy
- Crops inside tunnels can be worked when rain and wet soil outside prevent normal field work.
- Relatively inexpensive; excellent opportunity to make a good return on the investment.

Landowners interested in constructing seasonal high tunnels through EQIP, should contact their local NRCS office. Local office contact information is available online at:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/contact>

Crops inside of a high tunnel.

