

Would high tunnel growing be suitable for you?



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Farming could be a good fit for you

Farming allows you to . . .

- be your own boss.
- set your own schedule.
- use machinery, adaptive technologies to complete tasks.
- be outdoors and can be therapeutic.
- generate income.



Photo credit: Caragh Fitzgerald

What are the advantages to growing in a high tunnel?

Let's take 2 minutes to explore your ideas:

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Advantages to growing in a high tunnel

- Growing space and layout can be planned according to skills.
- Growing can be in-ground, raised beds or vertically.
- Some climate controls exist.
- Longer growing season (increase profitability and productivity).
- Some tasks can be automated (watering & ventilation).
- Level ground and pathway materials are appropriate for accessibility issues.
- Possible winter storage or work space.

What are the drawbacks to growing in a high tunnel?

Let's take 2 minutes to explore your ideas:

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Drawbacks to growing in a high tunnel

- Upfront cost and work for site prep, buying and building high tunnel.
- Limited growing space.
- Organizational skills are needed to manage space and growing season.
- High tunnel maintenance is required (snow removal, shading, plastic covering).
- Limited to certain crops that can be grown.

Consider these items when exploring high tunnels

Pre-Construction Tasks

The prospective site will . . .

- require access for workers and vehicles.
- access to water and electricity.

The high tunnel will likely . . .

- be purchased from a vendor.
- require financing.

Construction Tasks Will Involve

- Site preparation
- Constructing the high tunnel
- Labor - 2 people minimum



Photo credit: Lani Carlson

High Tunnel Layout Considerations

Layout Considerations for the Growing Area

- Pathway Construction
 - High tunnel entrances/exits
 - Suitable pathway materials
 - Contrasting surfaces/colors
- Bed Formation or Construction
 - Raised beds
 - Super-raised beds
 - Widths
- Overall design & access



Photo credit: Caragh Fitzgerald

Tools, Devices & Systems to Consider

- Tools & Equipment
- Irrigation Controls
- Wireless/Remote sensing
- Climate/Ventilation controls
- Seating / Resting
- Other Ideas ??



Photo credit: Caragh Fitzgerald

Crop-Related Tasks & Considerations

- Seeding and transplanting
 - Appropriate seed varieties, days to harvest, and successive plantings
- Managing pests of specific crops
 - Insects, diseases, and weeds
 - Traps, spray, dust, pick, vacuum
- Mulching
 - To manage weeds
 - To retain soil moisture
 - To keep produce clean
- Staking or trellising of some crops
- Harvesting



Photo credit: Lani Carlson

Business Related Tools & Techniques

Based on your limitations or disability, how will you address . . .

- Financial record keeping?
- Production record keeping?
- Scheduling and organizing crop rotation?
- Implementing a marketing plan?
- Implementing a business plan?
- Other ideas??



Photo credit: Tori Lee Jackson

So, would high tunnel growing be suitable for you?

Look at a possible high tunnel enterprise critically, considering your own strengths and limitations.

- [Checklist of Steps for A Prospective High Tunnel Grower](#)
- [Why High Tunnel Growing in Maine Might Be a Suitable Enterprise for Persons with Disabilities](#)

Additional resources

- [SARE High Tunnels and Other Season Extension Techniques](#)
- [NRCS Growing All Seasons: High Tunnels](#)
- [NRCS High Tunnel System Initiative](#)
- [Minnesota High Tunnel Production Manual for Commercial Growers](#)



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