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.
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
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
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**
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??
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**