

# 10 Things to Re-Think

## As You Build a Greenhouse & Grow!

In the legitimate push to produce more and better food on the local scene, there has been a surge to integrate that perfect production tool against Midwestern winters: the greenhouse. It might be glass, or pipe and plastic, high tunnel or floating; it might serve to extend the growing season on either end, re-allocate the current work load across more months, or simply to provide a weather-proof work space in early spring. Regardless, it takes thought to do it right. Amidst a growing list of references 'out there' to help you with that process, here is a check list of key factors to consider before and as you add this feature to your farm and garden enterprises. Add to it; let us know so we can add to this; and here's to more and better food for your good effort!

1. SEASON EXTENSION or YEAR-ROUND – which is it for you; taking a break, staffing needs, heat & light, markets ...
2. FERTILITY & SOILS – role of compost, in the ground/ pots/ hydroponics/ soil bags, nutrient density and taste ...
3. YOUR MARKET – is it there for more food or food at a different season, new markets, seasonal pricing ...
4. THE REAL COST – structure, labor, compost, irrigation, heat & light, product price, cash flow ...
5. HEAT & LIGHT – passive or not, power source, fuel availability
6. IRRIGATION – water source, delivery system ...
7. CONSTRUCTION – slope, drainage, R value, wall height, bracing, who best to build it, portable vs stationary ...
8. EXPERIENCE – what's your's, need for internship, starting slow
9. CHOOSING SEED VARIETIES – including rotations, companion planting, winter hardy ...
10. BUSINESS PLAN - can you answer the 5 "W's" (why, what, when, where, and who) from your mom, neighbor, banker, and yourself ...

▶ *Please turn this over for a few good references...*

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# **RESOURCES**

1. ATTRA – Newsletter of the National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service; [www.attra.ncat.org](http://www.attra.ncat.org). NOTE: V.17 No.2 – April/May 2009 focus on hoop houses.
2. Sow the Seeds Fund – Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy fund to support sustainable food systems has a new hoop house site with podcasts, farmer blogs, and overall food work resources; [www.sowtheseedsfund.org](http://www.sowtheseedsfund.org). NOTE: Undercover Garden blog is from a hoop house farmer.
3. Some other books from the MOSES Organic Farming Conference 2009 Book Store (*in addition to several listed in the above ATTRA issue*):
  - a. ***Greenhouses for Homeowners and Gardeners***, Publisher: NRAES  
200-page book with sample calculations, greenhouse plans and 150+ line drawings. Covers construction planning, framing materials, glazing, layouts, equipment, environmental control, and selection of kits. Also discusses window greenhouses, growth chambers and garden structures. 2000.
  - b. ***Extend your Garden Season: Row Covers and Mulch***, Storey Country Wisdom Bulletin a-148

