

Checklist for Cold House Start-Up

- Is the proposed site higher than the land around it or can the site be shaped so runoff won't flow in?
- Do you have sites with reddish or sandy soils that have natural internal drainage?
- Will you ridge flat gray soils into beds for better in-row drainage?
- Has site been repeatedly tilled to germinate weed seeds and reduce weed seed reservoir?
- Have adequate amounts of lime, fertilizer, or soil amendments been incorporated into the soil?
- Was the plastic cover put on while the soil was still dry?
- If moveable, is structure stabilized on the corners and staked down against the wind?
- Is house sturdy or reinforced to withstand a heavy snowfall?
- Is double poly-plastic needed in this situation or can row covers be used under a single poly layer?
- Can the sides be either raised or lowered for clear day ventilation?
- Does it have venting in the peak of both front and back?
- Can both ends be opened?
- Was fringe of plastic left from base of frame outward 18 or 24" to divert runoff from sides?
- Can plastic mulch be used over rows or over entire floor?
- Does your all-winter house have double poly-plastic and an outside vented inflation fan?
- Do you ventilate timely to reduce condensation in winter and keep temperature below 90 in spring?
- Do you avoid over watering in winter and under watering in late spring?
- Are you starting to plant early enough?
- Are you "front loading" by planting extra by November to be harvested during slow-growing January?
- Are you planting the slower-growing red lettuces and kale two weeks earlier than the green varieties?
- Are you planting the mixed lettuce and the Asian greens densely enough?
- Do you have containers of dry soil that can be used to cover shallow seedlings when soils are moist?
- Do you want to direct seed some crops and flat & transplant others?
- Do you want a portable propane heater for the coldest nights?
- Do you have a soil thermometer and also a max-min thermometer placed 1' above the ground?
- Would use of heat lamps for short periods during overcast periods pay back with certain varieties?
- Do you have a plan for monitoring and responding to disease and insect problems?
- Do you want to try shade cloth and fertigation for summer production?
- Is frame stabilized so it can be moved without stretching the plastic?
- Are side boards or extra framing or shelving or southern doors causing shade on certain rows?
- Are you planting too close to the cold sides of the house?
- Can you avoid gritty leaves by not removing cold house early or by using plastic mulch or row covers?