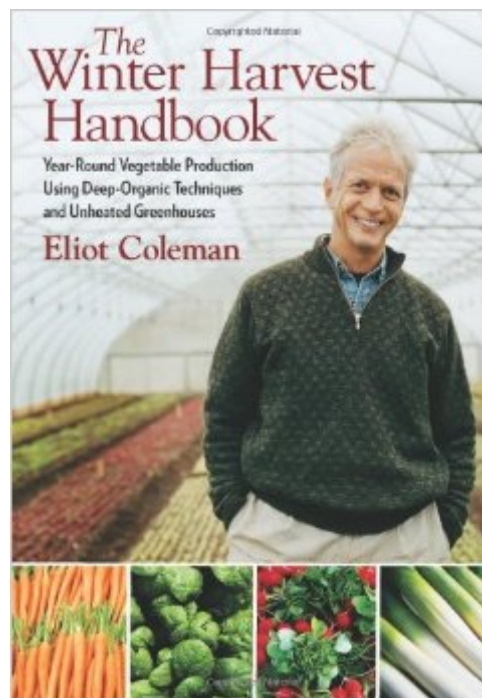


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The Winter Harvest Handbook: Year Round Vegetable Production Using Deep-Organic Techniques And Unheated Greenhouses



Synopsis

Choosing locally grown organic food is a sustainable living trend that's taken hold throughout North America. Celebrated farming expert Eliot Coleman helped start this movement with *The New Organic Grower* published 20 years ago. He continues to lead the way, pushing the limits of the harvest season while working his world-renowned organic farm in Harborside, Maine. Now, with his long-awaited new book, *The Winter Harvest Handbook*, anyone can have access to his hard-won experience. Gardeners and farmers can use the innovative, highly successful methods Coleman describes in this comprehensive handbook to raise crops throughout the coldest of winters. Building on the techniques that hundreds of thousands of farmers and gardeners adopted from *The New Organic Grower* and *Four-Season Harvest*, this new book focuses on growing produce of unparalleled freshness and quality in customized unheated or, in some cases, minimally heated, movable plastic greenhouses. Coleman offers clear, concise details on greenhouse construction and maintenance, planting schedules, crop management, harvesting practices, and even marketing methods in this complete, meticulous, and illustrated guide. Readers have access to all the techniques that have proven to produce higher-quality crops on Coleman's own farm. His painstaking research and experimentation with more than 30 different crops will be valuable to small farmers, homesteaders, and experienced home gardeners who seek to expand their production seasons. A passionate advocate for the revival of small-scale sustainable farming, Coleman provides a practical model for supplying fresh, locally grown produce during the winter season, even in climates where conventional wisdom says it can't be done.

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Customer Reviews

Got a little land? Love a lot of vegetables? Then build yourself a Winter Wonderfarm. You may not be able to enjoy fresh garden tomatoes in the dead of winter, but there are more than 30 green and root vegetables that you can enjoy. From carrots to onions, celery to kohlrabi, and almost every vegetable in between, your Winter Wonderfarm will become the envy of your neighborhood. Perhaps that's where the expression "green with envy" came from . . . a better, greener farm. The three components to a successful winter harvest, according to Mr. Coleman are: 1) Cold-hardy vegetables 2) Succession planting 3) Protected cultivation. As it turns out, if we can protect our vegetables from the winter winds, we can grow many vegetables successfully, even in the snow. Some vegetables, such as spinach, lettuce and matpe, are actually even sweeter and more tender in cooler temperatures. Think you surely have to provide supplementary lighting? Nope . . . not needed when grown in one of Mr. Coleman's "cold houses". He uses these cold houses even in the Maine winters of Zone 5. You'll also learn about vertical production of tomatoes and how to create your own cold frame with quick hoops made of electrical conduit and 10-foot-wide spun-bonded row cover held down by sandbags. These hoops can cover the same area as a 22 by 48 foot greenhouse at 5% of the cost. Speaking of cost, a recent article in the AARP Magazine indicated that we can save \$1,000.00 a year growing our own vegetables in a small garden. Now add your winter crop savings, and imagine what you'd save. Your Winter Wonderfarm will yield delicious, organic vegetables, improving your diet and fattening your wallet. Forget putting out the Christmas lights . . . just grow vegetables. Lynette Fleming, Coauthor of Lunch Buddies: Buddy Up for a Better Diet

I agree with jyoung's review that there are great stories and history lessons in the book of how winter gardening works and how it worked for the French & British in the 1800's. The whole last 1/3rd of the book is about marketing and packaging produce for a business, so not very applicable for me as a home gardener. I also find his stories and techniques difficult to apply on a smaller scale for my home garden. I feel the book lacks actual how-to information, it is just some stories on what he has tried over the years and what he grows to sell to his customer base. Living at almost 11,000 feet in Colorado, I was really hoping for some good information on winter gardening since we have around 7-8 months of snow/year including receiving snow sometimes around (or after) July 4th. Though the book was an interesting read and a good history lesson, it was not quite the technical how-to guide I was looking for.

I took a chance on buying the Winter Harvest Handbook because I trusted Coleman's work on the New Organic Grower. I would always recommend checking this book out from the library first to see what you really think before buying. I love the book's glossy color photos and details (his other two books have lovely line drawings). This book can be read by the small commercial grower and the home gardener alike. The tone of the book as in his other books is plain English, which I love. I've always been interested in using a greenhouse to extend the growing season (yes, even here in Central Texas) however this book changed my mind about the traditional sense of a greenhouse. To me, a green house was a place to store house plants or tropicals over the winter (a sometimes heated storage room), a crowded place to grow a few summer veggies in pots or tubs, or a place to start seeds for the spring and that was it. This book and Four Season Harvest changed all that. I really liked both books they really complement each other. One caveat: if you grow veggies on 1/4 acre or more you're going to like this book more than if you grow veggies on a small lot (less than 100 sq. ft), on a balcony, or in containers. The reader will have to scale down significantly the concepts in this book. I don't think it's impossible; but it is more work for the reader. also, this is not a how-to book. Coleman gives some guidance but no step-by-step instructions. The book focuses mostly on unheated hoop-houses, cold frames, and low tunnels (in a commercial setting but again, the concepts can be modified to fit the home grower). Also important to note the focus is on cool season crops (he mentions briefly some summer veggies growing in an unheated green house but I got the impression they were in preparation for the summer, i could be wrong). He may grow tomatoes in a green house all year because of his growing zone. Keep in mind that Coleman's experience is from working on a New England farm so one must modify his suggestions to apply his techniques outside of this growing zone. As a home gardener, I would not let the fact that the book's concepts are based on small commercial farming discourage me. again, though these are unheated greenhouses he's talking about. As inexpensive as he can make them. One tiny thing that did bother me--Coleman mentions two way overpriced tools, seed planters that can be found at Johnny's Select Seeds. One seeder is nearly 600.00\$ and the other seeder is 250.00\$. Why do I mention this? Because at first glance, Coleman's organic labor intensive techniques or use of old hand tools may put people off (do a lot of people still use a scythe?). I know it did for me; because even at the home gardener level I'd like to increase my productivity. As a commercial grower I can see the benefit of the 6 row seeder outweighing it's 600.00\$ price tag. Regardless of this tool, I think that many of the techniques are worth the effort (even if you just read them) in the long run, if you're looking to rely less on chemicals and more on organic methods. Coleman doesn't tell you to go out

and buy these tools but he does encourage you to be creative. Hope this helps. Lastly, I think that Coleman's other book, the Four Season Harvest has many more specific details on greenhouse growing (unheated). I liked that book more than this one, this is why I say it's a great companion book. If I bought this book alone I may have been disappointed.

I have his first one, which I really enjoyed. This one is better-with color photos that will really excite any gardener. There are lists of specific seeds he has found will grow under winter conditions in the greenhouse, and how to help them best make it through the freeze. He lists helpful items and where to get them. An easy read, for the person who wants to grow for their family or to sell. A helpful fun book. Elliot is a good teacher.

Once again Elliot Coleman has provided us with a wealth of knowledge when it comes to both home and commercial gardening. In these times of change, it is reassuring to know that there are those who are more than willing to share what they have learned. We have been using some of his techniques here in New Brunswick, Canada with great success. We are currently eating spinach in April and May that we planted last fall in our cold frame. If a crop can survive one of our winters, they should survive elsewhere. If you want to put in a garden, this is a must book to own.

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