

Questions to ask when considering a greenhouse, crop and growing system:

- 1) Site conditions, permits and zoning.. will the public have access to it?
- 2) Crop or product selection... how much care will it take and how much will my return be?
- 3) Infrastructure investment... what will it cost to prepare the site, build the greenhouse and install the various systems?
- 4) Time investment... how much time do I want to spend caring for the crops and maintaining the greenhouse?

Pros and cons of different greenhouse configurations:

- 1) Cost approx. \$800-2000: Small, low hoop house (17'w x 48'l x 8'h) with no heat and natural ventilation. Crops can be in ground or on benches, best for hardy plants.

Pros:

- low initial, operating and maintenance costs
- crop flexibility; not committed to one expensive bench setup, easy to cover and uncover during different seasons, can actually be moved with relative ease
- can be built just about anywhere, no permits needed, can even be built over septic field or tanks
- not very susceptible to wind
- quick temp. change if needed (quick to heat and cool)

Cons:

- limited space for plants and people
- difficult to expand as a connected structure
- not much volume under cover to act as outside temp. buffer (as well as inside disease or pest buffer)
- difficult to micro-adjust or control temp., shade and ventilation; quick to react to outside condition changes

- 2) Cost approx. \$2000-20,000: Medium to large hoop house (28'w x 100'l x 16'h) with heat, natural ventilation or mechanical or both. Crops in ground or on benches.

-Virtually the same as #1, though the pros are diminished, as are the cons.

- 3) Cost approx. \$20,000-500,000: Gutter connected bay or range (size is almost unlimited, gutter height generally 9'-12') with heat, electronically controlled vents or fans. Crops usually on benches, but can be in ground.

Pros:

- extreme flexibility, often with ready made components
- easily expandable in any direction; easy to segment for different climate needs
- durable
- maximum floor space as well as room overhead for shade / irrigation / trolley / hanging plants
- large air volume to act as temp. swing and disease buffer

- easier to micro-control and adjust climate and ventilation; slow to react to outside condition changes
- condensation control often built into structure
- water from gutters can be collected, redirected or reused

Cons:

- extensive site preparation needed
- building permits usually required
- high initial, operating and maintenance costs
- slower to react to ventilation needs, especially natural (roof and sidewall vents)
- though flexible in possibilities, costs and complexity tend to make the house dedicated to one crop once set up

List of greenhouse manufacturers or suppliers (most have catalogs available on request):

1) Rimol Greenhouse Systems

Hooksett NH

877-RIMOLGH (746-6544)

www.rimol.com

-Manufacturer of hoop and gutter houses, greenhouse supplies and systems. Quite willing to customize as they make the parts themselves. Will also sell partial houses if you have an unusual size or shape requirement.

2) Griffin Greenhouse and Nursery Supply

Tewksbury MA

978-851-4346

www.griffins.com

-Greenhouse structure distributor, supplies and systems. They don't manufacture the houses, but can get just about anything and have a good sales and technical support staff.

3) W. H. Milikowski Greenhouse and Nursery Supply

Stafford Springs CT

800-243-7170

www.whmilikowski.com

-Greenhouse structure distributor, supplies and systems.

4) Stuppy Greenhouse Manufacturing, Inc.

Kansas City MO

800-733-5025

www.stuppy.com

-Greenhouse manufacturer. A little more distant than Rimol, but a good quality house. They have a very informative catalog.

If you have any questions, or want to run an idea by me, just give me a call:

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