



community development partnership

Promoting a vibrant and diverse community on Lower Cape Cod

Extending Her Growing Season

This was Drake Cook's (Pure Joy Farm in Truro) first winter season planting and harvesting for more than her personal needs. Her incentive – the Orleans Winter Farmers' Market. Pure Joy Farm is a vendor at the Market. Drake participated in the creation of the Market in her role on the Orleans Winter Farmers' Market Advisory Committee. And, she is currently the Market Manager. We recently discussed some of the methods, challenges and opportunities of extending her growing season.

Getting produce in the winter, especially any volume of produce, involves planning. Drake planted all the seed for her intended winter produce in mid-summer. The seed grew to a harvestable size by October – when the sunlight changes and the temperature shifts. At this point, it is either left outside and covered with salt marsh hay and leaves or brought into their hoop house.

The veggies remaining outside, root vegetables, are harvested when needed, before each Farmers' Market. For Pure Joy Farm these vegetables consist of carrots, beets and turnips this year. Drake commented, "The root vegetables are great and easy."

In the hoop house, all produce is covered with cloth row cover, unless it's sunny. When it's sunny, it can get up to 75 degrees in the hoop house and the vegetable get to soak in the sun. Vegetable in the hoop house for Pure Joy include greens, broccoli and kale.

Part of growing is experimentation. While attempts with a couple of vegetables-kohlrabi and rutabaga-did not go as hoped, Drake learned lessons for next year. She also has an even better sense of how much she wants to plant next year and of what. For instance, she'd like to do more greens to have available. Along with this comes a more consistent and less laborious heating method within the hoop house – which she's working on.

As she begins to think about summertime produce, she is pleased with her first 'extended growing season', saying "If they can grow four seasons in Maine, there is no reason why we can't do it here too."

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