Moving High Tunnels at Joe’s Brook Farm

Mary Skovsted
Overview of Joe’s Brook Farm

- Headed into 5th year of existence
- 5 acres of organically grown (not certified) berries and vegetables
- 2 moving tunnels 3 stationary tunnels
- Sell wholesale, 4 markets, CSA and at our farm stand
Why Have a Moving High Tunnel?

- Better soil health practices
- Economics
- Buzz
Why not?

- Risk integrity of tunnel structure
- You may be able to achieve the same effect by having two tunnels or using grafted rootstock
- You actually have to move it!
Design

- 1st house: 28’x48’ Ledgewood tunnel on permanent hemlock tracks
- Low cost way to convert a frame (see Coleman’s design from New Organic Grower)
- Requires 2 vehicles to move it
Design

• 2nd House: 26’x 84’ Ledgewood tunnel on wheels
• Used thicker gauge pipe, more bracing, anchor at every fourth bow
• Used roller system as designed by Michael Smith of Gypsy Meadow Farm
• Added angle iron welded to bottom of bows to keep tunnel from racking
• Additional expense of $1,500- $2,500
Experimental crops

• Winter Carrots- Mokum, best tasting carrots we’ve ever grown
• Spring Leeks- King Richard
• Earliest Potatoes- rose gold
• String Beans- Provider
• Cherry Tomatoes- Black Cherry, Sungold, Mojo, Yellow Pear
Cropping Strategies

• 1st tunnel has two sites. We grow 3 crops and move the tunnel twice

• 1st crop is Johnny’s 5 star greenhouse baby lettuce mix

• Start it in late October and over winter it for a spring harvest
• 2nd Crop-- Zucchini
  - Transplant late April
  - Harvest 3rd week in May

• 3rd Crop Heirloom Tomatoes
  - Transplant late May
  - Harvest till mid October
Cropping Strategies

• 2nd House has 4 site possibilities
  – 2 sites have propane and electricity hook up

• 1st Crop early tomatoes Geronimo, Cobra, and grafted
  – Planted first week in April
• 2nd Crop is winter spinach

• Seed the spinach outside in early September - move the house on in November
Conclusion

- Benefits of a moving tunnel are ultimately subtle
- Can achieve same goals by other means
- We’ll keep experimenting anyway