

Study Finds Hoop House Farming Can Be Effective, Despite Challenges

Hoop Houses: From page 3

and is resistant to the sun, Michigan State University Horticulture Professor John Biernbaum said. The sun can quickly damage standard plastic.

Farmers were required to prepare monthly reports showing the type and amount of produce grown and the amount of money made from selling the produce. The study is conducted by the C.S. Mott Group for Sustainable Food Systems of Michigan State University.

Farmers were also given guidelines on how to use the hoop houses, David Conner said. He is a research specialist with Mott Group. Farmers are not allowed to heat the hoop houses in any way, are required to sell what they grow, and have to plant certain crops such as peas during specific times.

Following the planting restrictions has been somewhat difficult, Mrs. Hoolsema said. Besides peas, the Hoolsemas have been required to plant tomatoes and peppers sooner than normal. While this worked for some farmers using hoop houses in southern Michigan, the climate in the Upper Peninsula is colder and has made growing those plants a challenge.



Hoop houses extend the growing season, but growing during the winter can be difficult, farmers say.
(Photographs by David Conner)

The farmers have found mixed results with the hoop houses, Mr. Conner said. The Hoolsemas have done rather well with their produce, but other farmers have had less success with the installations, resulting in a low yield of vegetables.

Success often depends on the amount of effort the farmers put in maintaining their crops and learning how to work with the houses, Mr. Conner said. The houses are worthwhile, he believes, but farmers need to adapt their techniques to make the best use of them.

"Things happen in a hoop house more quickly than outside," he said. "You really need to keep on top of things."

The study will be complete at the end of 2009, and the farmers will be allowed to keep the hoop houses and equipment provided. The study will determine if the hoop houses are cost effective and can make farming more profitable, Mr. Conner said.

Farming in a hoop house is preferable to traditional outdoor farming, Mrs. Hoolsema said, and she plans to buy additional hoop houses when she has the money. The learning curve -- and the price -- is high, she said, but the increased growing season length,



Hoop houses extend the growing season by drawing heat from the sun and warming the earth. The houses cost roughly \$10,000, but many farmers like Dale Moore of Engadine have found them to be a worthwhile investment.

high quality produce, and protection offered is worth it.

Mr. Biernbaum has studied hoop houses since 2001 and has found them to be effective in farming, as well. He conducts the Student Organic Farm at Michigan State University, a farm where students can learn how to farm using hoop houses.

Using hoop houses became necessary for the farm, he said, as students were often unavailable during the summer for the main growing period. Using hoop houses gave students a chance to grow produce in an extended growing season.

The student farm is used to conduct workshops for farmers wanting to learn how to use hoop houses, Mr. Biernbaum said. The first part of the workshop focuses on how to construct one, while the second portion focuses on tech-

niques.

The next hoop house workshop will be Tuesday, September 22, at the Michigan State University Student Organic Farm in Lansing. It will last from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Space is limited to 25 people. Contact Adam at admontri@msu.edu to register. The workshop is free.

Mr. Biernbaum has also acted as an advisor to the Mott research project. He aided farmers in constructing the installations and provided a list of suggested vegetables to grow at different times of the season.

The study was funded by the United States Department of Agriculture Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service and Project GREEN (Generating Research and Extension to meet Economic and Environmental Needs).

Goehmann To Leave Post at Cedarville, DeTour Schools

Superintendent: From page 1

They're a lot of good people to work with," he said. "We've had our budget woes and, unfortunately, that's going to continue."

The declining student enrollment in both districts, which eventually led to a \$99,000 deficit in Les Cheneaux's 2008/09 school year budget, was not a major factor in his decision to retire; he said he was thinking about retirement before the budget problems started. The problematic budget did play a role in his decision, but it was "not the straw that broke the camel's back," he said.

Mr. Goehmann leaves behind him a 37-year career in education in two states. He began as a sixth grade teacher in Ponca City, Oklahoma, in 1972, after earning his teaching degree from Concordia University in Seward, Nebraska.

Originally from northwest Detroit, Mr. Goehmann returned to Michigan a year later to teach third and fourth grade at a Utica Lutheran school. He later taught at Lutheran middle schools in Rogers City and Hemlock, where he eventually became principal.

During the early 1990s, he attended Central Michigan University to earn his master's degree

in school administration in 1991 and a specialist in education degree in 1993. Soon after, Mr. Goehmann took his first superintendent job at central Upper Peninsula district Carney-Nadeau Public Schools in Carney in 1994. He presided over that district for seven years before accepting the superintendent position in Cedarville.

He said he has enjoyed his time in Les Cheneaux and the many positive things that have happened at the school during his tenure.

"I can't take credit for it, but some of the extracurricular things, like our band going to Australia and China and our boys basketball team winning the state championship" are some of his favorite memories from the last eight years. "I can't personally take credit for any of that, but it happened on my watch."

He is not sure of his retirement plans, but he does plan to assist both boards in selecting interim superintendents by September 1. The two boards will have to decide if they will hire one person as part-time superintendent for both districts or if they will each hire one full-time person.

"It's been a rewarding experience," he said. "I will help in any way I can during July and August as

the board goes through this administrative transition."

Once retired, he said, it is likely he will leave the Les Cheneaux area, but will remain in Michigan.

Board of education reappointments

At a special board of education organizational meeting Tuesday, July 7, the Les Cheneaux Community Schools Board of Education reappointed Kate Ter Haar as president of the board, Dave Murray as vice president, Marcia Perkins as secretary, and Marianne Coyne as treasurer. The positions are one-year terms voted on each year.

Board members also voted to waive their \$20 per meeting payment to help save the district money, saving the district \$2,300 in the year. The board meets on the third Monday of each month at 7 p.m. in the school library.

In DeTour, the school board meets the second Monday of each month at 7 p.m.

Water Warriors To Begin Journey in Mackinaw City

The Water Warriors will launch personal watercrafts Sunday, July 19, in Mackinaw City for their 19th Annual Endurance Ride to raise funds awareness for Special Olympics Michigan.

Each year the riders travel 350 miles in five days. They ride along the entire length of Lake Huron and the St. Clair River before ending July 24 at the Idle Hour Yacht Club on Harsens Island.

The Water Warriors aim to surpass last year's total by raising more than \$79,000. Since the

Water Warriors started in 1991, as a spin-off of the Wertz Warriors snowmobile endurance ride, they have raised more than \$2 million for Special Olympics Michigan.

To become a rider, individuals must be 18 years or older and raise a minimum of \$1,800. (Riding for just a couple of days can also be

arranged.) Some riders solicit funds through their business associates, while others host fundraisers such as pig roasts, spaghetti dinners, golf tournaments, and poker runs. For more information about becoming a Water Warrior, contact Rowena Filary at (586) 468-2412.

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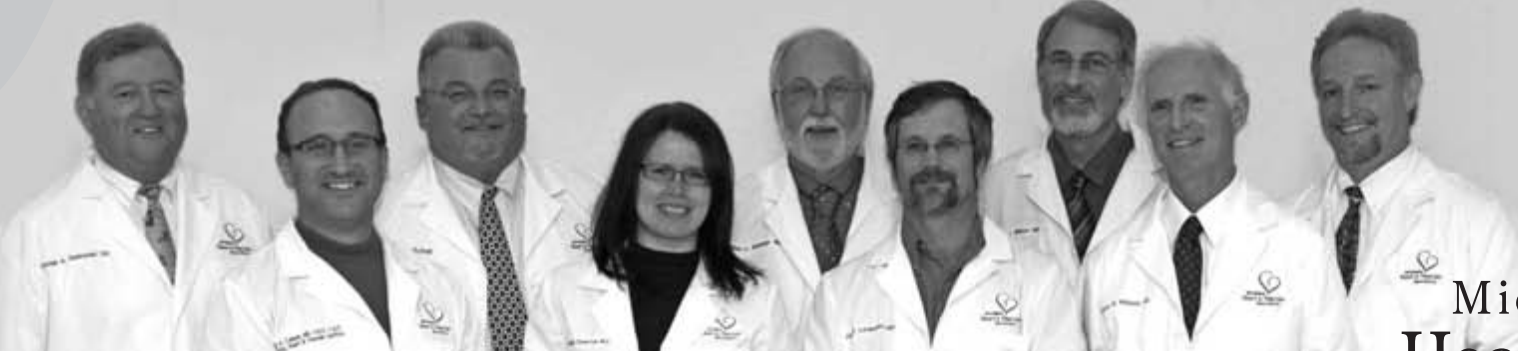
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