

We've been hard at work getting our gardeners set up for the fall growing season. As part of our work with Grow Appalachia, our participating gardeners have received the tools and equipment to construct their own miniature unheated greenhouses (called "midtunnels") to use as a way to extend the useful growing season.



Here's one of our gardeners, Randy, learning how to bend a section of EMT conduit into a "rib" for his midtunnel frame.

These small frames are anchored into the ground on 2' sections of rebar, and covered with clear UV-stable plastic, the same kind that is used to cover greenhouses. This allows the warmth from the sun to be trapped inside the frame on chilly days via the greenhouse effect. On warmer days, the sides can easily be rolled up by hand for ventilation so as not to "cook" the crops to death. Since the thin plastic doesn't actually do much work at insulating and keeping the heat in once the sun goes down, a second cover of spun-woven agricultural fabric will go over top of the plastic like a blanket on cold nights so as to help hold the warmth in and protect the plants from cold and frosty nights. It's a bit of extra work, but when done properly can extend our growing season by a very useful month or two.

Additionally, during the summer months these frames can be left in place with the plastic removed, and they make a great frame for hanging other useful crop protection fabrics, such as a thinner type of spun-woven fabric to protect against pesky insects that might want to nibble on your crops, or knitted shade cloth to block out some of the sunlight and heat so that cold-season crops can still be easily grown in some of the hotter summer weather that would normally make them induce flowering and turn bitter and eventually die.



Here is the midtunnel of one of our gardeners at the community gardens in Chauncey, OH. Pictured with 30% shade cloth currently in use.

To learn more about how to create your own midtunnel, check out [this link here](#) of step-by-step instructions from [the Ohio State University Vegetable Production Systems Lab](#) on how to cheaply and effectively build and use a midtunnel.

Our gardeners are harvesting food like crazy. Collectively, they have harvested well over 800 lbs of food (and probably much much more since they last checked in too!) and at least 1/4 of that has been donated to local food pantries and charitable organizations. Related to this is our new goal for the [Donation Station](#) at CFI – We’re hoping to collect and distribute over 100,000 lbs of fresh local produce to local food pantries and families in need. We have already received and distributed over 42,000 lbs of food this year, and are hoping for a big fall harvest and generous donations to meet our goal for the year. Let’s keep up the good work, and bring fresh and healthy food to those who need it most!

And now for some more tasty weeding tips. That's right, I did mean to say tasty. While prevention and early elimination of weeds are the easiest ways to combat the pesky unwanted plants that keep creeping into your garden, it's inevitable for most gardeners that at some point or another these weeds are going to get away from you for a while. When that happens, you'll end up needing to do some serious amounts of plant removal. You may remember the delicious recipe for Cream of Lamb's Quarters Soup from [my blog post back in June](#) that makes these weeding efforts much more rewarding.

Well I'm happy to share that lamb's quarters isn't the only common edible weed you're likely to encounter in your garden, and there are many more ways to eat it and others. Don't view weeding as a chore anymore, make it a harvest with:

Dandelion

Lamb's Quarters

Chicory (sauteed)  
(and as a coffee substitute)

Dock

Burdock

Purslane

Chickweed