

Feeling the need to have more tangible accomplishments. Thinking about microgreens, more hoophouses, and more storage crops for 2025. The dangers of winter boredom.

(Shrewsbury) A sunny January allowed just enough solar gain in our high tunnels to offset the freezing nights: we fully harvested our unheated tunnels by the end of 2024, and the cut greens look amazingly undamaged in their slow regrowth gearing up for March harvest.

For the previous three years, we've rented a soil steamer to control chickweed in our tunnels. This fall instead of steaming, we mulched all three tunnels with 2-3" of composted hardwood bark on the beds, and fresh bark in the pathways. Weed control is excellent, and the material also acts as a capillary break: our tunnels have been covered with 3 layers of row cover nonstop for the past 4 weeks, and with the gable vents always open, the covers are dry and plants are not suffering from excess humidity.

Since in our down-season I prefer skiing to moving row cover, this is a wonderful benefit. The downside? Moving row covers on and off the greens during their harvest season moves bits of bark on top of the greens, and slows down harvesting, washing, and packing a bit in order to sell clean produce. All in all, next year I'll put more composted bark on our tunnels rather than rent a steamer again.

Planning for next year involves trimming out parts of our production and distribution that are the

(Guildhall) I've not reported the past few months, so I'll play catch up. Due to the summer flooding, we only had 30 acres of potatoes to harvest out of the 52 we planted. Knowing we'd have a smaller pile of potatoes than usual, we did not send any to the terminal and really pushed our grocery store outlets. Particularly our new 5# retail bags which are variety specific, with unique colors and UPCs/barcodes to make it easy for the retailer. Typically, we skip shipping for a few weeks in October so we can focus on harvesting, but with less acres to get thru we kept our standard market schedule, and added some days.

Selling strong in October left us in a good position to make the big Thanksgiving sales we sometimes miss. We needed those big orders and endcap displays this year. Watching the big repackers and Idaho crash the price of 5 lb. bags for Thanksgiving was disheartening though. I don't care how low the price is, \$1.20 for 5 lb. (\$12.00 10x5 master) delivered is too cheap. I think everything in the supermarket has at least doubled over 2 years, except potatoes. I was also really underwhelmed by winter holiday sales this year. Most coops and grocery stores didn't order anything beyond a standard week.

Harvest went well. We harvested 966,000 lbs., down from our usual 1.3-1.6 mil lbs., but 8 of our 30 acres were reds, and they aren't a yielder. The whole crop (including the new potatoes) averaged 32,000 lbs. per acre; golds did 40,000 lbs. so yields per acre were down, but not disastrously so.

On the upside, the quality was the best ever. Zero hollow-heart in golds or russets. Only the early chippers had a problem with it. No scab anywhere this year. Some rhizoctonia on golds but not enough to matter. Boron, magnesium, and kelp foliar-fed this summer paid off.

Reds in the barn are now starting to look skin-wise. Dark Red Norland never stays nice late; I'd love to find a late storing red. Russets have a 95% pack out, it's incredible. I don't like them much to eat, but you're not throwing your money off the grading table with them, and customers like them.

Taxes are done, working on field plans and seed orders. We're switching to a 3-year rotation and not planting potatoes in fields prone to flooding anymore. Endless mechanical issues with trucks this winter keeps us busy: brakes, carbs, and fuel pumps.

We've still got beautiful golds and russets. If folks need them for farm stores or CSAs, please reach out. sparrowarcfarm@gmail.com

(Plainfield NH) We are continuing to convert the sides of the greenhouses to automatic roll ups to accommodate

The cold snap in December wreaked havoc on crops like chard that was growing so luxurious in the warm fall but not quite hardened off to take on 7-below even with supplemental heat that turns on at 24 degrees under the row covers. We are asking others but feel 28 is a better option for extended cold, cloudy days. Subsequent cold snaps in that range have slowed growth to a trickle with cloudy weather as a “drive it home” effect.

A lot of crops are growing nicely in the greenhouse to fill in gaps and add to the offerings soon. We seed flats or strip-trays of many greens on our radiant heat benches then flip them into the tunnels for an immediate bed that reduces the days to harvest.

We steamed most beds in the tunnels last fall so it’s been nice with reduced/no weeding. Plants generally healthy; they need spring warmth and more light but barn cleaning, seed ordering,

