

Extend your gardening with cold frames

Cold frames can be as simple as a hole in the ground to a structure made from re-used materials or an insulated raised bed filled with straw. They utilize solar energy and insulation to extend the growing season in the spring and fall. Cold frames are versatile and easy to make. You can use them in the spring to harden off plants that you started indoors, in the summer to plant some of the more heat-hardy plants before their actual planting season, and in the winter to protect your plants from freezing.

Straw bale cold frame

- Easy construction includes six straw bales and a clear rigid top (ex: glass windows, or polycarbonate).
- Good for acclimating young plants that were started indoors.
- Start growing greens and cold hardy vegetables during the winter for a spring harvest.
- Use the straw as mulch in the garden beds or for a [straw bale garden](#).



Portable wooden cold frame

- Build your own using wood and clear plastic or polycarbonate, or purchase kits available through catalogs and garden centers.
- Ideal for protecting spring and fall vegetables from light frost.
- Good for insulating cold-season greens over the winter and to insulate root crops (carrots and parsnips) when blanketed with a thick layer of leaves or mulch.

Plastic hoop tunnel cold frame

- Sink 12-18" metal stakes into the ground, slide 6' sections of PVC pipe over them creating an arch and stretch clear polycarbonate plastic over the hoops.
- Good for hardening off seedlings grown indoors and protecting frost-sensitive plants.
- Good for growing lettuces, cabbage, kale, spinaches, beets and herbs in the spring, winter and fall.
- Warms soil for spring seeding.

Tips to remember:

- **Placement** of the cold frame should allow for South, SE or SW exposure in the Northern Hemisphere. If you're burying in the ground, place beneath the frost line for best insulation.
- **Ventilate** the cold frame during warmer weather (above 40F).
- **Water** when necessary in the morning to allow plants to dry out during the day.
- **Angle** the top of the cold frame to allow rain and snow to run off.
- **Vermin** will be drawn to your cold frame; have mouse and mole traps in place.