

Harvest Efficiency Tips

- Use the appropriate tool for the job
- Make sure your tools are sharp
- Weed reduction strategy – a weed-free crop is much easier and quicker to harvest
- Use appropriate size containers (bins, totes, buckets, baskets...)
- Minimize hand motions
- Stand or stoop, not back and forth
- Specialize in tasks-division of labor
- Bunch in the field when appropriate
- Keep a count so you don't over/under harvest
- Maintain a clear harvest list and check off crops when harvested so there is no duplication
- Consider mechanical harvesting for some crops
- Consider the best time of day to harvest
- Get the crop to the cooler asap
- Consider having a harvest manual for each crop (examples at roxburyfarm.com harvest manual pdf)
- Discard damaged/rotted fruits in the field
- Minimize field travel time
- Minimize vegetable handling
- Maintain an accurate field map so everyone knows where each crop and succession is
- Have clean tools at the ready
- Communication – who, what and where
- Plant with harvest in mind
- Plow down spent crops for access/visibility/crop health
- Decide which crops are best harvested with a buddy, the whole crew, or individually
- Harvest with an eye on the weather

Resources

- Coolbot (electrical unit to force air conditioner to lower temperature) (www.storeitcold.com) (\$315)
- Barr Inc. (used refrigeration equipment, Oshkosh, WI)(www.barrinc.com)
- Glacier Valley (fruit and vegetable packaging supplies) (www.glacierv.com)
- Knott's Handbook for Vegetable Growers by D. Maynard and G. Hochmuth, 1997 (4th ed.)
- Knolt's Midwest Produce Supplies, Charles City, IA 641-228-4496



Storage Facilities

Root Cellar

- Approximate Cost: \$12,000
- Interior Dimensions: 16' X 11'
- Features: insulated concrete walls (ICF), floor and ceiling (2" foam board); 5' cooler door for access; Coolbot system; dual fresh air vents

Packing Shed

- Approximate Cost including electric: \$45,000
- Outdoor, covered area: 11' X 24'
- Enclosed Dimensions: 21' X 24'
- Features: insulated walls and ceiling; floor drain; wide doorway for pallet jack access; good lighting inside and out; stainless steel rack, sinks, table; indoor water hydrant

Ideal Storage Conditions

- Potatoes: 40 degrees, 90% humidity
- Garlic: 32 degrees, 70% humidity, 6 months
- Onions: 32 degrees, 70% humidity, 6 months
- Storage Cabbage (I like 'Storage#4' from Johnny's): 32 degrees, 98% humidity, 5-6 months
- Carrots: 32 degrees, 98% humidity, 6 months
- Greens: 32 degrees, 98% humidity, 1-2 weeks
- Tomatoes/Peppers: 50 degrees, 90% humidity
- Winter Squash: 50-55 degrees, 75% humidity

Both facilities were paid for using savings from farm sales, with no loans. It's nice to have the facilities asap, but your personal comfort level with taking on debt may push you to make all farm purchases with cash.

We hired a local general contractor, who then hired the concrete, electric and plumbing crews. The contractor (Travis Grawin) had experience with pole buildings and was willing to work with all of our parameters and ideas.

Be sure to consider water flow around facilities (drain tiles for ground water and runoff from uphill, gutters for the roof and wash water drainage).

