Published on *Kitchen Gardeners International* (http://kgi.org)

"First Garden" now has the "First Hoophouse"

Thu, 12/17/2009 - 11:32 -- Roger Doiron

The White House has recently extended the First Family's garden season by installing hoophouses (or "low tunnels" to be more precise) in the new White House kitchen garden. Here's what White House Food Initiative Coordinator, Sam Kass, had to say about it on the White House blog [1]:

Over the past few weeks, we have worked to prepare the soil for the planting of the winter garden. We are able to extend the growing season by using a simple, inexpensive cover called a high tunnel or hoop house. A hoop house simply amounts to a series of metal bars set in a row over one of the beds, and a fabric or plastic pulled tight around the bars. As the sun warms the garden during the day, the fabric traps the heat in, keeping the plants from freezing overnight. Although there are many kinds of plants that aren?t able to grow even in the hoop houses, we are thrilled to have so many delicious things growing at this very moment!

We have planted spinach, lettuce, carrots, mustard greens, chard and cabbage, and we will add a few more varieties in the next couple weeks. I especially look forward to cooking with the spinach. Winter spinach is extra sweet. Sugar doesn?t freeze, so spinach produces extra sugars in the winter to protect itself from frost. It tastes almost like candy. We are going to make soups, salads and, of course, Chef Comerford?s famous cream-less creamed spinach.

One of the great thing about hoophouses and low tunnels is that they're easy and inexpensive to make. Here are some instructions [2] for building one of your own.

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[1] http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2009/12/16/planting-winter-garden
[2] http://kitchengardeners.org/build-hoophouse