

University of Massachusetts Amherst
ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst

University Librarians Publication Series

University Libraries

October 2009

Review of The Winter Harvest Handbook: Year-Round Vegetable Production Using Deep-Organic Techniques and Unheated Greenhouses

Madeleine K. Charney

University of Massachusetts Amherst, mcharney@library.umass.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umass.edu/librarian_pubs

 Part of the [Construction Engineering Commons](#), [Environmental Design Commons](#), and the [Plant Biology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Charney, Madeleine K., "Review of The Winter Harvest Handbook: Year-Round Vegetable Production Using Deep-Organic Techniques and Unheated Greenhouses" (2009). *Journal of Agricultural and Food Information*. 30.

Retrieved from https://scholarworks.umass.edu/librarian_pubs/30

This is brought to you for free and open access by the University Libraries at ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. It has been accepted for inclusion in University Librarians Publication Series by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. For more information, please contact scholarworks@library.umass.edu.

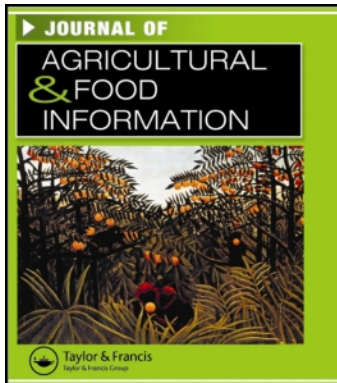
This article was downloaded by: [Charney, Madeleine]

On: 3 November 2009

Access details: Access Details: [subscription number 915664630]

Publisher Taylor & Francis

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Journal of Agricultural & Food Information

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t792303959>

Review of The Winter Harvest Handbook: Year-Round Vegetable Production Using Deep-Organic Techniques and Unheated Greenhouses

Madeleine Charney ^a

^a University of Massachusetts Amherst, Amherst, Massachusetts

Online Publication Date: 01 October 2009

To cite this Article Charney, Madeleine(2009)'Review of The Winter Harvest Handbook: Year-Round Vegetable Production Using Deep-Organic Techniques and Unheated Greenhouses',Journal of Agricultural & Food Information,10:4,350 — 351

To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/10496500903245461

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10496500903245461>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.informaworld.com/terms-and-conditions-of-access.pdf>

This article may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

Book Review

Review of *The Winter Harvest Handbook: Year-Round Vegetable Production Using Deep-Organic Techniques and Unheated Greenhouses*, by Eliot Coleman. White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green, 2009. Reviewed by Madeleine Charney, University of Massachusetts Amherst, Amherst, Massachusetts.

“To the children who love our vegetables.” This is the simple yet powerful dedication found at the very beginning of Eliot Coleman’s latest book, *The Winter Harvest Handbook: Year-Round Vegetable Production Using Deep-Organic Techniques and Unheated Greenhouses*. In the introduction, Coleman describes his Maine farm where the “back side of the calendar,” the winter months, are as important and productive as the traditional growing season of the summer months. Cold-hardy salad and root crops raised in simple unheated greenhouses allow for year-round income, good nutrition, and fresh vegetables which Coleman claims are even sweeter, more tender, and flavorful when grown in cold temperatures. This practical book systematically covers the crops, tools, planting schedules, and techniques used in their four-season operation.

In an early chapter called “Historical Inspiration,” Coleman credits Parisian growers from the second half of the 19th century with the climax of market gardening, resulting from centuries of refining intensive gardening techniques. He points out that the key to their success was location, sustainability, quality and productivity—the same factors modern-day gardeners can use to succeed and improve upon with laborsaving devices and new technologies. These include, then and now, glass-covered frames, lightweight rail tracks (instead of roads) to access all parts of a parcel, and long-armed irrigation systems that are self-propelled by water pressure.

In another chapter, crisply entitled “Sunlight,” Coleman leads the reader through a thorough explanation of how to skirt the common myth that there isn’t enough sunlight in the winter to sustain crops. He demonstrates how careful record keeping and charting of data can yield accurate calculations around the intersection of limited winter light (10 hours or less per day) and the establishment of root systems. Coleman encourages farmers to collect their own data, share it with others, and continue to refine their own practices.

Designs for building “cold” and “cool” greenhouses are provided along with instructions for preparing soil and maintaining its fertility. Instructions

for growing and tending winter and summer crops include sowing, harvesting, weeding, and pest control. A chapter on marketing and economics stresses *fresh* and *local* as the buzzwords of the day, as opposed to *organic*. Beautiful crops and professional presentation are touted as the key to sales (p.167). Coleman covers packaging, setting prices, and innovative tactics such as creating "Thanksgiving Gift Packs" from a surplus of carrots (p.173).

The last chapter on deep-organic farming wraps up on a philosophical and political note with questions such as "Who controls organic?" (p. 203) and how to defend organic farmers' time-tested studies of their crops and soil. Coleman traces back to sources such as *Soils and Men*, the 1938 Yearbook of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, to reinforce the long-held understanding that the health and fertility of the soil is tantamount to disease-resistant plants. And again, he emphasizes that "real food comes from local farms run by deep-organic farms" (p. 209). To Coleman, the term "deep" in this context is synonymous with "nourishing" and "exceptional."

Insets appearing throughout the book offer miscellaneous but pertinent information including book, journal, and Internet sources; growing and marketing tips; inspirational references; and a tribute to Emery Emmert, the "father of plastic greenhouses in this country" (p. 59). Useful charts and graphs include harvest seasons based on cool-house versus cold-house crops, plot rotation schemes, and planting and harvesting dates based on light levels. Appendices include climate maps, effects of temperature on plants, tool and seed suppliers, and sowing dates (a chart which would have been better integrated into the text). The annotated bibliography is a bit too streamlined, listing only selections on historical materials and winter harvesting.

The vivid photographs of Barbara Damrosch (Coleman's wife) are simultaneously artful, illustrative, and educational: a diminutive landscape of salad greens newly unfurling from the moist soil, an action shot of neighbors hauling a greenhouse into place, the rosy-veined hands of a gardener maneuvering a trowel modified for transplanting, and boxes of dew-kissed produce which invite you to reach in for a crunchy treat. Her illustrations, though less graceful, are functional nonetheless.

Coleman's 40 years of experience shine through with a light wit, engaging anecdotes, and hearty doses of "on the ground" examples, making this book both readable and highly informative. This book is recommended especially for academic libraries with vocational agriculture programs and for their community of small farmers and amateur or professional gardeners alike.