



# The Greenhouse and Hoophouse Grower's Handbook: Organic Vegetable Production Using Protected Culture

By Andrew Mefferd

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### Best practices for the eight most profitable crops

Today only a few dozen large-scale producers dominate the greenhouse produce market. Why? Because they know and employ best practices for the most profitable crops: tomatoes, eggplant, cucumbers, peppers, leafy greens, lettuce, herbs, and microgreens. *The Greenhouse and Hoophouse Grower's Handbook* levels the playing field by revealing these practices so that all growers—large and small—can maximize the potential of their protected growing space. Whether growing in a heated greenhouse or unheated hoop house, this book offers a decision-making framework for how to best manage crops that goes beyond a list of simple do's and don'ts.

As senior trial technician for greenhouse crops at Johnny's Selected Seeds, author Andrew Mefferd spent seven years consulting for growers using protected agriculture in a wide variety of climates, soils, and conditions. *The Greenhouse and Hoophouse Grower's Handbook* brings his experience and expertise to bear in an in-depth guide that will help readers make their investment in greenhouse space worthwhile.

Every year, more growers are turning to protected culture to deal with unpredictable weather and to meet out-of-season demand for local food, but many end up spinning their wheels, wasting time and money on unprofitable crops grown in ways that don't make the most of their precious greenhouse space. With comprehensive chapters on temperature control and crop steering, pruning and trellising, grafting, and more, Mefferd's book is full of techniques and strategies that can help farms stay profitable, satisfy customers, and become an integral part of re-localizing our food system. From seed to sale, *The Greenhouse and Hoophouse Grower's Handbook* is the indispensable resource for protected growing.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

“From small hobby farmers to advanced greenhouse growers, I don’t know anyone who wouldn’t benefit from reading *The Greenhouse and Hoophouse Grower’s Handbook*. Andrew does an exemplary job of highlighting basic principles of plant growth and microclimate modification to help producers design their own management systems and diagnose problems in the greenhouse or hoophouse.”--**Cary Rivard, extension specialist, Kansas State University**

“*The Greenhouse and Hoophouse Grower’s Handbook* answers the questions that both new and established farmers are asking, including which staple crops will sustain a farm’s operation and how to best maximize yield. As protected agriculture continues to grow in popularity and necessity, Andrew’s book will help farmers at every level achieve higher profits as they use this reference to guide them through the seasons under film. A must-have for any grower.”--**Nick Burton, owner, Victory Gardens, Paris, Texas; founder, State of the Soil**

“This comprehensive book is a must-have for organic greenhouse and hoophouse producers, whether experienced or just getting started. Andrew Mefferd’s years as both a grower and a writer shine through. He clearly explains the basics of structures and environmental management, while also covering the nuances of grafting and ‘steering’ plants to be most productive. Growers will be pleased with the attention devoted to the best practices they’ll need to succeed with eight different crops.”--**Vern Grubinger, vegetable and berry specialist, University of Vermont Extension**

“When we started our wholesale greenhouse back in 1974, the best references were the equipment catalogs, and we pored over them each night. Now Andrew Mefferd has created the most complete greenhouse grower’s manual in the world. It contains the full spectrum of proper greenhouse growing for organic vegetable production and all its factors and, importantly, is detailed from a foundation of experience. This book is a fact-filled treasure, accessible for all. Thank you for debriefing, Andrew. You are a hero of horticulture!”--**Alice Doyle, cofounder, Log House Plants**

“Finally! A book that makes the specialized and highly refined techniques of the big European and North American hothouse growers accessible to farmers, market gardeners, and growers at all scales, with clear explanations of the practices and why they work. It took me twenty years to figure out half of this on my own; I’m glad I don’t have to wait another twenty to figure out the rest.”--**Josh Volk, author of *Compact***

**Farms; consultant, Slow Hand Farm**

“Hats off to Andrew Mefferd and his comprehensive guide to growing in a protected environment! While covering all the basics, this book takes growers to the next level, with in-depth discussions on the physical environment, plant biology, and their intriguing relationship. Once hard-to-find info on topics such as plant steering and grafting is presented thoroughly and clearly. Importantly, the last chapters cover the practical ins and outs of growing eight of the most significant crops for protected culture. Every grower will learn lots from this book; I sure did.”--**Richard Wiswall, author of *The Organic Farmer's Business Handbook***

“Andrew Mefferd’s book fills a gaping void in the literature for market growers. I highly recommend it to anyone growing in greenhouses, or who aspires to. With experience few others have, Mefferd explains growing techniques used in advanced greenhouses, and then shows how smaller-scale growers might put them to use. I kept a pencil by my side and plan to use lots of ideas on our own farm.”--**Ben Hartman, author of *The Lean Farm***

“This is an important book that will give growers the tools and resources to increase production and profits in protected culture environments. In one book, Andrew has packaged the detailed technical growing information that took us years and thousands of dollars to acquire for our farm. This book will be one I refer to and recommend often.”--**Michael Kilpatrick, farmer; cofounder, In the Field Consultants**

“*The Greenhouse and Hoophouse Grower's Handbook* is a must-read for beginners as well as a valuable, up-to-date resource for experienced growers. Mefferd has written a comprehensive overview of the elements of growing crops under cover. So much of the food available now is from greenhouse production, and most from faraway lands. This book will help you be the one growing crops for your local market.”--**Eric Sideman, PhD, crop specialist, Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association**

“Although greenhouse and high-tunnel food production is a well-established industry, small and beginning growers have never had easy access to information about how the professionals do it. Andrew Mefferd has bridged that gap with this important new book. He makes technical information accessible in a lively and lucid style. Everyone who owns or plans to buy a greenhouse or hoophouse should read this book.”--**Lynn Byczynski, author of *Market Farming Success* and *The Flower Farmer*; founder, *Growing for Market***

“With this book, Andrew Mefferd, a firm supporter of the local food movement, offers a knowledgeable

contribution to help growers (especially in cold climates) develop skills to deal with challenges and reap the benefits of protected cropping. This is not a generalist hoop house book but a menu where growers can select specialized professional practices to suit their situation, whether growing microgreens; grafting, pruning, and trellising vine crops; or 'crop steering' to select for leaf growth or fruit development."--**Pam Dawling, author of *Sustainable Market Farming*; contributing editor, *Growing for Market***

"The production of organic vegetables using protected culture to modify the natural environment and optimize plant growth is one of the most highly productive systems for organic vegetables. This handbook provides a broad spectrum of knowledge on growing structures and climate control as well as propagation, pruning, trellising, crop steering for maximum production, and grafting plants for natural disease control. For aspiring market gardeners, young and old, *The Greenhouse and Hoop house Grower's Handbook* is a must-read!"--**Dr. Merle H. Jensen, professor, Controlled Environment Agriculture Center, The University of Arizona**

"Finally, a seasoned greenhouse grower has taken the time to share professional greenhouse techniques with the small-scale farming community. Such valuable work was a long time in the coming! Whether you're currently growing in a greenhouse or hoop house or planning to do so (and you should!), this book will teach you the best practices. It concisely and methodologically demystifies the all-encompassing skill set that you need to become successful at growing lucrative crops in protected space. Andrew Mefferd knows his stuff, and his book is absolute gold. Can't recommend it enough."--**Jean-Martin Fortier, author of *The Market Gardener***

#### About the Author

Andrew Mefferd spent seven years in the research department at Johnny's Selected Seeds, traveling around the world to consult with researchers and farmers on the best practices in greenhouse growing. He put what he learned to use on his own farm in Maine. He is now the editor and publisher of *Growing for Market* magazine. Previously, he worked on farms in six states across the United States before starting his own farm. Andrew also works as a consultant on the topics covered in this book. For more about the magazine, please visit [www.growingformarket.com](http://www.growingformarket.com). For more information on consulting, see [www.andrewmefferd.com](http://www.andrewmefferd.com).

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**Sheila Lefevre:**

Reading can called mind hangout, why? Because if you find yourself reading a book especially book entitled *The Greenhouse and Hoophouse Grower's Handbook: Organic Vegetable Production Using Protected Culture* your thoughts will drift away through every dimension, wandering in each and every aspect that maybe not known for but surely will become your mind friends. Imaging each and every word written in a book then become one type conclusion and explanation in which maybe you never get just before. The *The Greenhouse and Hoophouse Grower's Handbook: Organic Vegetable Production Using Protected Culture* giving you another experience more than blown away your mind but also giving you useful information for your better life in this particular era. So now let us explain to you the relaxing pattern is your body and mind is going to be pleased when you are finished looking at it, like winning a. Do you want to try this extraordinary shelling out spare time activity?

**John Jones:**

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