

- Speaker 1: [00:00](#) Welcome to the old fashioned on purpose podcast. So our first frost came last week and I always feel this weird, bittersweet feeling whenever that happens. Can you relate? There's a little bit of relief that the chaos and the craziness of summer is drawing to a close. And I don't have to spend my life weeding and watering and harvesting, but there's also that sadness that when I go outside, I won't have the happy plants and the bright flowers and everything's going to be Brown and gray and drab for a good many months to come. If you've ever wished that you could stretch your growing season just a little bit more to give either your vegetables longer to mature or your flowers a little bit longer to bloom, well you can. And in today's episode we're going to chat about three little tricks that you can use to extend your garden's growing season.
- Speaker 1: [01:05](#) It's gonna be good. So I'm your host Jill winger, and for the last 10 years I've been helping people just like you who feel a little bit uninspired by modern life. I'll teach you how to create the life you really want by learning how to grow your own food and master old fashioned skills. So first off, I just got to say, if you're listening to this topic and you're kinda like, yeah, that's nice, but sometimes I secretly just want my garden to die. I want to reassure you that I have been in the same boat many, many a time. And maybe that's not the most homesteady thing for me to say. I don't really care. But there are definitely years where I am like, please frost, come soon and put me and this garden out of my misery. You know, we all have the good years and we all have the bad.
- Speaker 1: [02:04](#) So even though this year for me was one of my toughest gardening seasons yet, just with our weird weather and the hail, it just was like really disappointing. I kind of was surprised at how melancholy I felt this weekend as I was putting the garden to bed and harvesting the leftover vegetables and just kind of tidying up for the frost. Like I was kind of just sad and I think for me like this year, more than before, and maybe it's because our summer was so late to get started and so cool, it kind of felt like we didn't have a full summer and I just was a little bit sad to put all the memories and all the hopes and dreams of the garden to bed for another year. So it was kind of a weird feeling. Maybe you can relate, but anyway, you can extend the garden season. I chose not to extend anything this year just because a lot of plants had a really rough start and weren't real healthy to begin with.
- Speaker 1: [03:03](#) And I'm like, let's just not keep trying to, you know, part the waters here. Let's just let them die and decompose and we'll start over. But you can make your growing season last longer if

you want to. And here are three tricks that I have found that seem to give gardeners the best results. Okay, so number one, hoophouses are something that come up quite frequently. Hoophouses can be large structures that you could like drive a tractor through. They can also just be small things that you put over a raised bed, but in essence, a hoophouse is basically just a series of hoops that are bent in different intervals and then you put a type of plastic or material over the top of the hoops. Okay. It's kind of like a very makeshift greenhouse sort of thing. Hoophouses can not only protect your plants from frosts, they can also extend your growing season by about an extra six to eight weeks depending on where you live, which is pretty cool if you ask me like that's a considerable amount of time.

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The one thing to remember about hoophouses is that they do have to be ventilated, so if you're dealing with a warmer day, you want to make sure you pull the plastic off or you lift up the ends of the plastic. Otherwise you can kind of fry the plants underneath because it's going to be such an intensified heat coming through the plastic sheeting. So while you know, really the shape of hoophouses are all the same. So hoops, you know laid out, whether they're big hoops or little hoops, you really can be creative with what you use to cover the hoops. You could even use that little shower curtain that's been laying around, you know, put it to use, repurpose it, call it good. The most common DIY hoophouse I see uses PVC pipe. So you basically just take lengths of PVC. PVC, I keep saying PVC, P V C you know what I mean?

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Having trouble talking today. Did you take the PVC and you would bend those lengths over the row or over the bed. You may need to stabilize them into the ground, like with some rebar or maybe you use some clamps to clamp them onto your bed. There's probably a lot of ways you can attach them and make sure they don't spring back a straight, but you're going to put those in intervals along your row or your bed and cover it with the plastic or some other sort of waterproof material. The height of these hoops is really up to you. You could make them barely cover the crops, you could make them tall enough to walk under. It really just depends on what you're trying to cover, but that can be a pretty affordable and kind of a DIY makeshift sort of thing that you feasibly could decide.

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Do you know well into September or whenever your frost is coming? It's something you could run to the hardware store, get the materials and put together in a weekend. If you decided last minute, you wanted to extend the life of some of your plants. So I really think that's a great option because some of the other

things like the greenhouses, obviously those can extend life of your garden or your plants, but that's something that takes a little more investment, a little more effort. You're not going to throw it up on a weekend. All right? Option number two would be a cold frame and a cold frame is basically just a bottomless rectangular box that you can place over the top of your plants to protect them from frosts. Or if the box is stationary, you would take seedlings or portable plants and put them in the box.

Speaker 1: [06:48](#) I had a reader share a pretty cool structure she had made with a cold frame that she used in fitted over, fit it over one of her raised beds and she was growing some really nice greens and some Hardy plants in there, uh, well into the freezing temperatures with that cold frame. So that was pretty cool. I've also seen people build cold frames out of old windows. They'll make a wooden box, they'll use the window as the lid, and they will position this up against the Southern wall of their house so it gets all that good light and they'll use that in the spring to give their seedlings a chance to kind of harden off, or they'll use it in the fall. They'll plant maybe lettuce or kale or chard in there and let that do its thing and they'll have greens or lettuce while it's snowing.

Speaker 1: [07:40](#) It's a pretty cool option. You can make the sides of the cold frame, like I said, out of wood. You can also use cinderblocks bricks or any other materials you have laying around. You could even use straw bales as a side. So you could literally like make a box out of straw bales. And then on the top you put a piece of glass or plastic or fiberglass or an old window. Um, and that it can be that easy. Now obviously if you have a large garden trying to strategically position straw bales and old windows is going to be really, really tricky for a large amount of square footage. So this is probably an option that you're going to do for more smaller plantings or pots. Um, but it's a good option. I like it, especially in the spring. So you can get some seedlings out early. You could plant some lettuce early and you're just extending the season on the front end.

Speaker 2: [08:37](#) Sure.

Speaker 1: [08:38](#) And again, remember with your cold frame, just like with your hoopouses, ventilation is important. So on the warmer parts of the day you want to crack open the lid, prop up the window. Even on the cooler days it's good to allow a little bit of, so just make sure there's some airflows so you don't create too much of a sauna for your plants. Um, but they're a really great option. They don't have to be expensive and you can really piece them

together with stuff you have laying around your homestead. Okay. My last little trick, this is definitely more of a small scale strategy and that would be close as, so this is kind of an old fashioned technique that's been around since the French use them in the 1600. So this is very legit that basically what they would do is take a cloche, which is a bell shaped kind of glass dome thing and they would use that as a little greenhouse over single plants.

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Now, obviously I don't think really any of us are going to be putting glass domes over, you know, all of our tomatoes or cabbages or whatever. That's not super feasible. But you can take things like recycled milk jugs or vinegar bottles or old plastic juice bottles, clean them out, take off the labels, um, and then cut off the bottom and put those over the tops of the plants. Like that's completely doable. And garden, these garden cloches are going to work like cold frames. You know, the same sort of phenomenon will happen where the sunlight will warm the soil and protect the plants from the frost. But just like the cold frames, you're going to need to ventilate. So make sure that you're paying attention and you either remove them on the warmer days or on kind of a miles a day. You may take the lid off the milk jug if you still have it, or take the lid off the juice jug and let the air flow happen that way, just so we don't scorch the plants.

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Now obviously with the cloches, the downside is this is not gonna work for a very large plants. It's not going to work for a ton of plants. Um, but if you have a few little herbs, let's say you have some Rosemary that you're trying to last further into the year, things like that, it can be a really good option to just stretch the season just a little bit more. And you can also save your cloches and use them again in the spring when you put out some seedlings and you need to protect those seedlings on a very windy day or an extra chili day. Put that cloche on top and just give it a little measure of protection. So as we wrap things up, just three member, if life is crazy busy for you, like it is for me, sometimes you can always just appreciate the natural break and gardening that comes in the fall and winter for most of us.

Speaker 1: [11:34](#)

I know there are places in the South where you guys can garden almost all year round. Um, but for those of us with climates that have seasons, it's okay to roll with the season and just enjoy the darkness and the stillness of winter. And don't forget, even if you do zero official season extending techniques, there are still plenty of things like kale, turnips, carrots, parsnips, chives, Brussels sprouts even that you might find thriving in your garden well past the frost. So for example, my carrots and

parsnips, they're still out in the ground. I'm not worried about them. They actually get a little bit sweeter. They're actually better to eat after they've experienced some frost. So I planned to leave those guys out there for a good couple months. Um, even if it snows a little bit on top, totally fine. We'll just pull them as we need them and call it good.

Speaker 1:

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So if you'd like a little more information on how I garden and how I built our most, I should say we rather how we built our raised beds. Cause it was definitely a teamwork deal between my husband and I. I didn't do all of it. I have all the details of the building, of our beds and dimensions, how we did our sprinkler systems, all that good stuff in my complimentary raised bed guide. And I'll drop that link in the show notes or you can grab it over at theprairiehomestead.com/raisedbedguide. And that is it for today. If you have a minute, I would love it if you would pop over to your favorite podcast player, hit subscribe and leave a quick review so other people can find this podcast and bring homesteading into their lives. Thanks so much for listening and I'll catch up with you next time on the old fashioned on purpose podcast.