



## Supplies: Row Cover

Row cover is a useful tool to organic farmers and gardeners alike. It's made of spun white polyester and allows sunlight and water to penetrate and reach plants. The fabric is usually placed over wire hoops over the bed, and secured around the edges. Different thicknesses are available, as row cover can be used to protect plants in many different ways. Here are a few of our favorites!

- Protect from cold temperatures. Thicker types of row cover create an insulating barrier that keeps the plants several degrees warmer than the outside air. This warming effect can protect crops through a frost, or help crops overwinter. When using row cover to protect from cold, make sure the fabric is not touching the plants' leaves.



This row cover has been secured over a raised bed, to protect the plants from the cold.

- Warm soil and plants. Raising the temperature can benefit heat-loving crops, too. Warm-season crops like eggplants, peppers, and cucumbers love the extra heat that a layer of row cover provides. Just be sure to remove the row cover when the plants develop blossoms, so they can be pollinated.
- Keep out pests. Sometimes, row cover is the most practical method of deterring pest insects and animals. A thin row cover can allow plants to grow while protecting them from rabbits, groundhogs, bugs, and beetles. When protecting crops from insects, be sure to secure the row cover tightly around the entire bed. For fruiting crops, remove the row cover when crops bloom.



For insect control, be sure to secure the row cover tightly.

- Protect the soil surface. Some small-seeded crops like basil, cooking greens, and lettuce, can wash away in heavy rain. Other crops like carrots can have a hard time breaking through the crust that can form on the top of the soil after heavy rain. To keep a softer soil surface, cover the bed when you seed. After the seeds germinate, remove the row cover.





Row cover placed directly on the ground protects the soil surface and allows seeds to germinate more easily.

Row cover is helpful in many ways in the garden. There are a few disadvantages, however. Because the plants are obscured from view, it's easier to forget to water, harvest, or weed. Removing the row cover to maintain the plants or harvest can be time consuming and annoying. Check regularly under row cover to take note of how the plants are doing.

Row cover is available from several online sources. For larger quantities, try [Johnny's Seeds](#) or [Peaceful Valley](#). [Gardener's Supply](#) has smaller lengths.