



School Gardening  
Resources

PRIMARY LEVEL

**BORD BIA**  
IRISH FOOD BOARD

# Polytunnel Year Round Plan





Time of Year

| This can be carried out at any time of the year.



## 1 Construction

There are a number of ways of building a polytunnel. Follow the manufacturer's instructions or ask for their advice where possible (there may be parents with some experience or ask the caretaker).

Note that in windy areas it is best to bury the plastic in trenches instead of clipping to bars - generally, concrete foundations are not required.

When planning & designing the tunnel - make sure there is enough space for a whole class. Make raised beds as their edges can be made into seats. Try to use the tunnel for other teaching times, not just for gardening.



## 3 Notes

- ★ Don't plant crops that do well outdoors in the tunnel in summer, such as brassicas, as they will not do well!
- ★ Plant a mixture of flowers, fruit and vegetables in the tunnel.
- ★ Grape vines grow very well in a tunnel - plant in a corner and train along the bars.
- ★ If the tunnel is large enough, try fruit trees such as peaches or apricots - they will need pruning.
- ★ Keep the tunnel well vented to prevent disease (doors can be left open for most of the summer).
- ★ Ensure you plan the tunnel to allow space for a classroom and propagation area.



## 2 Advantages

- ★ Offers an all year round weatherproof space for gardening and other classes.
- ★ Allows crops to be grown in Ireland that would not survive /grow outside.
- ★ Extends the growing season right through the winter.



**For more information**

**Polydome** - [www.polydome.ie](http://www.polydome.ie)

**Colm Warren Ltd** - [www.cwp.ie](http://www.cwp.ie)

**email:** [info@cwp.ie](mailto:info@cwp.ie)

**Simon Cummins Polytunnel**

**email:** [cumminss@iol.ie](mailto:cumminss@iol.ie)

**Health and Safety**

- ★ Stay with your group.
- ★ Use tools safely.
- ★ Wash hands after garden session.
- ★ Please refer to the worksheet on Health & Safety for detailed information.



## 4 Autumn/Winter

- ★ Erect the polytunnel - September is the ideal time.
- ★ Plant potatoes, sow carrots, onions, salads, broad beans, mange tout and perpetual spinach.
- ★ Harvest and have a school cooking day.
- ★ Take cuttings - currants, etc.
- ★ Set up water harvesting system for the tunnel.
- ★ Make outdoor seating classroom for polytunnel.
- ★ Plant strawberries in pyramid pot system.
- ★ Divide herbs plants, e.g. chive, mint into pots.





## 5 Spring

- ★ Harvest autumn sown vegetables; e.g. onions, broad beans, spinach, oriental greens, rocket, parsley.
- ★ Seed or plant out salads, tomatoes, cucumbers, aubergine, squashes, courgette.
- ★ Protect all plants from slugs and frost.



## 6 Summer

- ★ Harvest second crops sown in spring.
- ★ Low level maintenance is required throughout the summer holidays as some crops may be ready before September (e.g. tomatoes) and will need eating! Make sure there is some food left for the classes when they return.
- ★ The tunnel will need watering throughout summer months - try to plan this into the school day (see 'Watering and Water Conservation' support sheet for more details).
- ★ Make supports for peas and beans - make tepees or fences from willow/bamboo canes.
- ★ Protect all plants from slugs.
- ★ Weed beds - add to compost heap.
- ★ Liquid feed plants.

