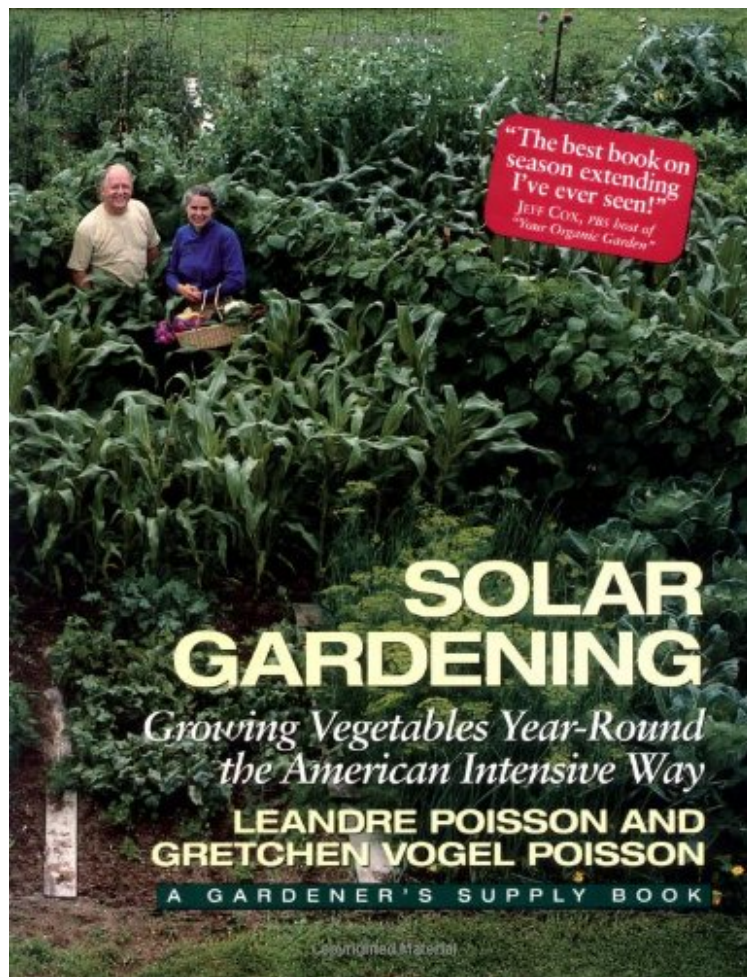


[PDF] Solar Gardening: Growing Vegetables Year-Round the American Intensive Way (Real Goods Independent Living Book)

## Solar Gardening: Growing Vegetables Year-Round the American Intensive Way (Real Goods Independent Living Book)

*Leandre Poisson, Gretchen Vogel Poisson*  
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#891302 in Books Chelsea Green Publishing 1994-09-01 Original language: English PDF # 1 11.00 x .63 x 8.251, 1.43 #File Name: 0930031695288 pages | File size: 21.Mb

**Leandre Poisson, Gretchen Vogel Poisson : Solar Gardening: Growing Vegetables Year-Round the American Intensive Way (Real Goods Independent Living Book)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Solar Gardening: Growing Vegetables Year-Round the American Intensive Way (Real Goods Independent Living Book):

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Before you spend money or time on this book....By M S Consider this review to be a supplement to the outstanding critique by "Gardener" (which I wish I had read, before spending money and time on this book!). The authors do not explain how to transfer their page-sized patterns to the 4-foot (solar pods) or the 8-foot (pod extenders) widths of plywood. In fact, the drawings omit any indication of scale, leaving it to

the reader to figure out. The authors also neglect to mention that a simple flexible curve ruler would go a long way toward enabling the drawing of the smooth curves required for the glazing. The authors glibly talk of sliding the pods to one side of the pod extenders for access, without ever acknowledging that the room required to be able to do so effectively precludes both the side-by-side use of these appliances and the intensive use of the garden space during the extended season. They glibly speak of moving the pods and pod extenders in and out of the garden without pointing out that the gardener will need help (potentially hired) to do so. The authors estimate the cost of materials for just one pod, without its extender or insulated base, at \$1500. Assuming (based on the plans) approximately twice that cost for the materials to build a pod extender, but omitting the (unknown) cost of the materials to build an insulated base, ignoring the value (or cost) of labor to build and move them, and assuming that one could earn 5% a year by investing this money elsewhere, each 8-foot by 8-foot unit must generate almost \$600 (\$9.33 per square foot) worth of ADDITIONAL produce or flowers for EACH of the 20 years of its projected lifespan, just to BREAK EVEN for extending the growing season by 2-3 months a year. Of course, for the units actually to be worthwhile, they would have to generate much more than that extra \$9.33 per square foot per year (which does not take into consideration the unknown cost of the insulated bases upon which the pod extenders rest). If you have a ready supply of large quantities of fresh horse manure with which to generate heat, you could extend the growing season a bit more with these appliances, making them slightly more cost-effective. 41 of 43 people found the following review helpful.

Disappointing lack of performance data for solar pod and cones. By R. Bruce McCreary. My primary interest was for the solar pod design for winter growing. I was very disappointed. I expected the designer/consultant to have tested his designs with some temperature measurements of air and soil, inside and out for some months. With that data I could extrapolate for my climate. The authors provide only max-min air temperature data for two days in mid March. I expected comparison data to a conventional cold frame, perhaps with a night time cover, but there is none. I also expected some seasonal performance data for the solar cones, say compared to cheaper wall-o-water devices or paper cloches, but again there is no testing, only vague glowing self appraisal mixed with 70's style solar philosophy. While the curved pods are attractive looking, they have some serious solar design issues for winter use (glazing angle vs sun angle), and thus despite the book cover, the pods are only spring/fall extenders. The book says they started seeds on Feb. 20th, the two days in March shown with 48/22F and 40/10F max/mins. The insulated pod had lows of 36 and 34; could likely result in dormant growing conditions unless soil conditions are much better. Soil temperature is very important, but no data was given, not even for these two days. These two days of max-min air temperatures for the pod (with and without the angel hair insulation) was the only performance data I could find in the whole book. The pods are not cheap. It's currently \$265 for just the glazing for one 4x8 unit! I think most people would be better served with a plastic film design, perhaps with properly sloped south side, insulated north. Since you're outside and it's just a cold frame, the usual green house problem of stench of hot plastic would not be an issue. The barrel used inside the pod for water-thermal storage is only shown once in a prototype but never discussed. We must assume it did not work (?) Again, it seems collecting some temperature data is too much trouble. The angel hair insulation is original and very interesting, but there is zero information on its light transmission except for aforementioned two days in March which shows a significant reduction of the high temperature- good for warm sunny days, bad for cloudy colder ones. The pods also lack any sort of automated cooling; which on a suddenly warm fall or spring afternoon can result in serious crop loss in just a few hours. Unless you want to be a slave to your cold frames, some sort of automated cooling scheme is essential. If you just lift the whole pod, you lose any protection from rabbits/rodents/squirrels, and then must resort to murder and mayhem. The "American Intensive" method promoted just means saving space for walk ways around beds, in exchange for having to tend the garden perched on planks over the bed boxes. Perhaps this makes sense for young limber folks with good balance and with no space. Put another 10 years on the authors and they'll "invent" raised beds. There is some good general gardening info, if that's what you were after. The writing style is enjoyable. The book is very well edited and is professionally published. It is being professionally promoted as something it is not ("Growing Vegetables Year-Round" is the misleading subtitle), and it is sorely lacking in good solar design information and performance data. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Full of ideas. By John McD. Lots of great ideas here. I need to try some out.

Solar Gardening shows how to increase efforts of the sun during the coldest months of the year and how to protect tender plants from the intensity of the scorching sun during the hottest months through the use of solar "mini-greenhouses." The book includes instructions for building a variety of solar appliances plus descriptions of more than 90 different crops, with charts showing when to plant and harvest each. The result is a year-round harvest even from a small garden. In Solar Gardening the Poissons show you how to: Dramatically increase the annual square-foot yield of your garden. Extend the growing and harvest season for nearly every kind of vegetable. Select crops that will thrive in the coldest and hottest months of the year, without artificial heating or cooling systems. Build solar appliances for your own garden. Armed with nothing but this book and a few simple tools, even novice gardeners can quickly learn to extend their growing season and increase their yields, without increasing the size of their garden plot.

From Library Journal The Poissons, experienced New England gardeners, present their system for continuous food production. Inspired by French intensive gardening techniques that originally utilized bell-shaped glass jars called cloches to protect tender plants and extend the growing season, the Poissons have developed solar gardening "appliances," including the Solar Cone, the Solar Pod, and the Pod Extenders. Use of these mini-greenhouses, combined with other gardening techniques such as intercropping, crop rotation, and careful site and soil preparation, can make it possible to harvest fresh vegetables year-round. Details are given on how to build the solar appliances, followed by information on 90 garden crops grouped by three main categories: heat-loving, cold-hardy, and cold-tolerant vegetables. Although only those with considerable space will be able to implement fully the American Intensive system (a garden area of 40' x 30' is needed for a family of four), the Poissons provide useful gardening tips for all organic gardeners. Highly recommended for all vegetable gardening collections. Virginia A. Henrichs, Chicago Botanic Garden Lib., Glencoe, Ill. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist "American intensive" gardening is what the authors call a continuous food-producing system that provides an ideal growing environment for the entire plant. By creating and maintaining a deep, well-balanced, fertile soil, the system optimizes growing conditions below the ground. By using heat-assisting devices to create beneficial microclimates for seedlings and mature plants, it ensures optimum growing conditions above the ground. The authors have designed solar devices--insulated pods, cones, and pod extenders--to ensure fresh harvests even in winter. These solar structures capture and retain the sun's heat in winter and diffuse strong sunlight and protect tender plants in summer. The book gives step-by-step instructions on building the solar devices and offers a month-by-month gardening guide for the three main North American growing zones--northern, moderate, and southern. There is advice on garden sites and soil, harvesting, storage, and seed-savings, as well as growing tips on 90 vegetables divided into heat-loving, cool-hardy, and cold-tolerant. George Cohen Booklist- "American intensive" gardening is what the authors call a continuous food-producing system that provides an ideal growing environment for the entire plant. By creating and maintaining a deep, well-balanced, fertile soil, the system optimizes growing conditions below the ground. By using heat-assisting devices to create beneficial microclimates for seedlings and mature plants, it ensures optimum growing conditions above the ground. The authors have designed solar devices--insulated pods, cones, and pod extenders--to ensure fresh harvests even in winter. These solar structures capture and retain the sun's heat in winter and diffuse strong sunlight and protect tender plants in summer. The book gives step-by-step instructions on building the solar devices and offers a month-by-month gardening guide for the three main North American growing zones--northern, moderate, and southern. There is advice on garden sites and soil, harvesting, storage, and seed-savings, as well as growing tips on 90 vegetables divided into heat-loving, cool-hardy, and cold-tolerant. (George Cohen) Library Journal- The Poissons, experienced New England gardeners, present their system for continuous food production. Inspired by French intensive gardening techniques that originally utilized bell-shaped glass jars called cloches to protect tender plants and extend the growing season, the Poissons have developed solar gardening "appliances," including the Solar Cone, the Solar Pod, and the Pod Extenders. Use of these mini-greenhouses, combined with other gardening techniques such as intercropping, crop rotation, and careful site and soil preparation, can make it possible to harvest fresh vegetables year-round. Details are given on how to build the solar appliances, followed by information on 90 garden crops grouped by three main categories: heat-loving, cold-hardy, and cold-tolerant vegetables. Although only those with considerable space will be able to implement fully the American Intensive system (a garden area of 40' x 30' is needed for a family of four), the Poissons provide useful gardening tips for all organic gardeners. Highly recommended for all vegetable gardening collections. (Virginia A. Henrichs, Chicago Botanic Garden Lib., Glencoe, Ill.)