

The threat of the first hard freeze kept the boys as busy as bees a few days before All Hallow's eve. A few frosts had fallen, tinging the tender annuals with a bit of black. But small lettuces might need protection, a field of pumpkins were ready to roll and the great pepper patch was soon to be history.

We use the tobacco plant bed covering, called Reemay, to keep the frost off of our heads of lettuce. It gets unrolled in the path. Like a sail in the wind, the cloth lands on our beds and flutters until we lay boards, posts, flowerpots, rocks, and whatever else we can find to hold it down.

There are different kinds of polyspun fabric for season extension. Tighter weaves offer more protection, but are more expensive. As the lettuce is cut and shipped, we move the cover over to the Chinese cabbages, which are more hardy than lettuce. Eventually the covers will end up on our kale, celery and parsley, for over wintering as much as old man winter allows.

The barn has been full of vegetables for a long time, and it's time to clean it out. Squash is sorted and moved into the house, which is pretty full already. We're starting to worry about all the weight in this old cabin. The foundation and beans weren't built with four tons of vegetables in mind.

Green tomatoes are harvested from the late tomato patch. We simply say bye to beans and basil. The last of the tuberoses, the swell flowers that smell so well, are picked to give away and the plants are cut down with a machete and mulched.

The pumpkin patch is a pleasure. I'm cutting the stems as fast as I can, and the harvesters sweep in behind me to quickly fill the truck up, twice. We're saving seed from the prettiest ones. Now my house is really full and looks like a Thanksgiving picture.

Finally we finish this full fall day picking Poppen's unpickled peppers. And it is another full truckload. These go into the cave for safekeeping. They'll last over a month there, but will need sorting at some point to pull out the bad ones.

Goodness gracious, what an abundant year! Mother Nature sure made up for last year's late spring freeze and dry summer. Apples and pears are still hanging, and the ground is littered

Gardening Comes To A Close

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with walnuts, butternuts and hickory nuts. As we wind down the gardening, gratitude explodes for the farm and all the helpers, visible and invisible. Let the cold weather come, to rejuvenate our soils and our souls.