

# Know Your Farmer Know Your Food Wyoming

## High Tunnels Extend Growing Season



*Produce grown in high tunnels.*

Made of ribs of plastic or metal pipe covered with a layer or two of plastic sheeting, high tunnels help extend the growing season for Wyoming producers.

In 2010, NRCS helped install six high tunnels. One each in the counties of Bighorn, Goshen, Platte, Sublette, and two in Sheridan,



*Photos courtesy of Painted Sage Farm.*

according to Andi Meyer, NRCS program specialist for the East area.

In Sublette County in southwest Wyoming, producers have only a 30 to 60 day growing season, of which native hay is the main crop produced. “We’ve had snow in July,” said Jennifer Hayward, NRCS district conservationist in the Pinedale field office.

She has helped one producer who farms half an hour from Pinedale with installation of a high tunnel. The producer, Maggie Palmer of Painted Sage Farm, is part of a Community Supported Agriculture program. Palmer gives community members the opportunity to buy local seasonal food directly from her. She also actively participates in local farmers markets as well as those within the region.

“We are able to farm at over

7,200 feet with 28 frost free days,” Palmer said. “We are growing year round without heat and I find that incredible.”

With such a short period of growth, all fresh produce has to come in from other areas. If more high tunnels are installed in this area, the push to buy locally could be realized to help reduce the use of fossil fuels in the current distribution system that relies heavily on trucks. Sublette County is the only county in the nation that does not have railroad tracks within its boundaries.

“I’m heading right now to harvest spinach, Asian greens, Hakurei turnips, and salad greens,” Palmer said. “This program has proved that local produce could be and is now available year round in Sublette County.”