

Hail Protection for my 2015 Back to Eden Garden

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A HAIL/HOOP HOUSE -- Choose a size first: 8' x 8' = 2 cattle panels needed; 8' x 12' = 3 panels needed; 8' x 16' = 4 panels needed.

Cattle Panels: 16' X 50" welded-wire panels for frame. (Big R \$19.99 each)

Tent Stakes: 4 black plastic stakes per panel for installing. (Harbor Freight \$3.99 6pk)

Metal stakes: Like rebar. 3 ft. long -- 4 per panel needed.

Chicken Wire: For covering. (48"x150ft at Lowes \$37)

Rope, optional: Only needed if using a shade tarp: 100 – 150 ft. to tie it down.

(Harbor Freight, \$10)

Thin wire: Just a few feet to secure panels together side by side. (Anywhere -- \$2)

Shade tarp, optional: 20' X 8' (Harbor Freight, \$39.99)

Installation: North-south orientation, so that the openings face north and south. Two people will be needed. You will need a mallet or hammer for pounding in the tent stakes plus a sledge hammer to pound in the metal stakes.

Step 1 Secure one side of a cattle panel to the ground with 2 tent stakes.

Step 2 While holding the staked end securely, form an arch 8 ft. at the base and secure the other side with 2 tent stakes. Panels are very spring-loaded, so be very careful.

Step 3 When adding each additional panel, overlap them by 4 inches. In 2 or 3 places, use thin wire to bind the panels together. If you are installing more than 2 panels, install the third panel underneath the second panel and the fourth panel on top of the 3rd panel and the fifth one underneath the 4th one and so on.

Step 4 Weave a 3 ft. rebar stake through both panels for more stability. With the sledge hammer, pound the stake into the ground at least 1ft.

Step 5 Cover the cattle panel arches with chicken wire, leaving the north and south ends open.

Step 6 To keep the wind-driven hail from the coming in north opening, use two pieces of chicken wire, offset, to close the opening. Plant sunflowers across the opening.

Step 7 If you want protect tender crops like spinach from the intense summer sun, install a shade tarp on top of the chicken wire and secure it with rope. A

PORTABLE/MODULAR HAIL/HOOP HOUSE, 8' X 8'

This modular design can be placed end to end to create any desired length: 2 = 8' x 16'

Cattle Panels: Two 16' X 50" welded- wire panels for the frame.

Chicken wire: To provide protection from wind-driven hail from the north and west.

Wood frame: Four 8 foot 2 x 4's, 4 corner brackets and screws

Fasteners: To fasten panels to wood frame

A HAIL CORRAL, (AN 8 FOOT CIRCLE)

A hail corral is a circular structure made of fencing and chicken wire. Because a hail corral is not tall enough to stand up in, it is best used for crops that need no tending throughout the summer, like winter squashes and potatoes. Adding an 8 ft. cattle panel turned on its side and attached to a center post allows squashes to grow vertically. Bring the ends of the fencing together on the south side of the corral so you can open and close it.

Fencing: 25 ft. of wire fencing, 4-5ft high. Can be new or recycled from Craigslist.

Post: Any kind of post for the middle as long as it is at least 1ft. taller than your fencing.

Cattle Panel: One 8' x 50" (Big R \$14.99)

Chicken wire: For the roof of the corral and covering the fencing on the north and west sides of the corral. 48" x 150 ft. (Lowe's \$37)

HAIL HOOPS, 4' X 4'

When cutting the 4 X 4 square fencing, cut down the middle of the square, leaving 2 inch prongs to put the ground. Tent stakes can also be used to add stability.

Fencing: A 6 ft. long section of 4 – 5 ft. high wire fencing, 4" x 4" square openings.

Chicken wire: 4 – 5 ft. stretched over the top.

SUNFLOWERS

Plant sunflowers on the north sides of structures to help protect your crops from wind-driven hail. Before planting the seeds, soak them first until they sprout.

LESSONS LEARNED:

Enclosing my hail/hoop house with plastic wasn't worth the work it took for the amount of crops I harvested. It also created a perfect home for voles, who had a built-in, all-you-can-eat salad bar! I won't do that again!

This year, I will make my hail/hoop house taller, so I can stand up inside.