KPOV – *The Point*

Gardening: Get Good at It

“Garden All Year: Build a Cloche”

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You can extend your gardening season – possibly all year – by building a cloche.

What is a cloche?

“Cloche” is French for a bell jar or dish that is set over delicate plants to protect them from cold weather. The definition has expanded to include both portable and permanent structures, like mini greenhouses—basically, they shelter plants from wind and cold.

A cloche can increase crop diversity, provide for early planting, and extend the growing season. Crops that normally may not mature before the danger of frost can be grown in a cloche. These crops include tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, and melons—crops that need to be planted after danger of frost and generally mature late in the season.

How much does it cost?

Building a cloche 8 to 12 feet long and 4 feet wide costs about $150–$250 for materials. This includes the wood for the raised bed. If you are simply adding a cloche to a raised bed you already have, the cost is significantly less. If choosing to use wood and plastic, It’s important to use wood treated with water-based preservatives (Food grade preservatives) to increase the longevity of the structure and to use UV-treated 6-mil clear polyethylene plastic to reduce clouding and it will last several seasons.

How do I build it?

Details on how to build a cloche can be found on the OSU Extension Website, Publication 1627, entitled "Build Your Own Raised Bed Cloche,” but here is a brief summary.

Basically, you build a rectangular raised bed, bend PVC piping (or metal if you prefer) over it to create an arch, secure those with wood, and then drape plastic, over the hoops. The directions sound more complicated than they are, but here we go.

## Materials Needed

Refer to the OSU Publication for specifications on board width and length, PVC piping, and plastic sheeting.

For the raised bed you will need four lengths of board to form a rectangle, secured with galvanized or stainless steel screws.

For the hoop frame you will need:

* three 10-foot lengths PVC
* additional boards to secure the frame
* plastic sheeting
* PVC clips which can be made or purchased
* a bungee cord
* galvanized pipe straps; and
* galvanized or stainless steel screws

## Assemble Raised Bed

First, build the raised bed base by screwing together the four boards forming the frame.

## Assemble Hoop Frame

To make the hoop frame, bend the PVC over the bed, one piece on the inside of each short end of the bed, and the third in the middle. Secure them to the bed with pipe straps.

Next, create a hoop backbone by laying a 10-foot by 4-inch board over the hoops, and adjust the PVC pipes as necessary to level.

Then at each end of the cloche, attach an 8-foot by 4-inch board, attaching one end to the bottom of the raised bed and the other end to the hoop backbone on the top.

Congratulations! You have completed the frame. See how easy that was?

The hoops can now be covered with plastic, row cover or other materials. First, stretch the 5 by 5-foot pieces of plastic over each end of the cloche, attaching them with PVC clips.

To create the curtain, drape the 9 by 10-foot piece of plastic over the top, and secure it by screwing a second 10-foot by 4-inch board over the backbone, sandwiching the plastic between the two boards.

For added strength and support, you can attach additional 10 by 4 boards on each side of the hoop, about 10 inches down from the top of the backbone.

Attach a bungee cord at the top center of the cloche. When the side curtain is rolled up, the bungee will hold it in place.

It sounds complicated, but it really isn’t. Just follow the steps in the OSU publication… you’ll find the link on our website in the resources listed with this transcript.

# Too hot outside?

On warm days, be sure to leave the cloche open so the plants don’t overheat.

# Too cold outside?

When the temperature drops, close up the cloche. If the temperature drops to 20 degrees, you may still need to cover your plants inside the cloche with a thick layer of leaves.

This easy cloche allows you to set your plants out earlier in the season, cover them when it’s cold, and leave them in the ground until harvest. You may also be able to grow winter crops.

For answers to all your gardening questions, please visit our website: www.gocomga.com and click on the KPOV tab on the orange bar. This has been Gardening: Get Good At It on KPOV’s The Point.

Resources:

<https://extension.oregonstate.edu/news/eat-garden-all-year>

<https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/ec1627>