Fresh facts: everything you need to know about locally-grown greenhouse veggies



The next time you're enjoying a relaxing bath, consider this: the average BC greenhouse can produce 150 pounds of tomatoes, 160 cucumbers, or 55 pounds of peppers in a space smaller than your bathtub takes up. And they're using water and heat more efficiently too!

When you eat local, you're contributing to the same goal BC's farmers have: producing food in a sustainable way for local communities. That used to mean limiting yourself to in-season food, but BC's greenhouses mean you can enjoy delicious locally-grown veggies almost year-round while also supporting a sustainable approach to farming. Here's why:

Greenhouse growers make super-efficient use of the land:
Greenhouses take up just .01% of BC's farmland but are responsible for 11% of BC's total agricultural production. To produce the same amount of vegetables in fields, you'd need 11,550 acres (more than 11 times the size of Vancouver's Stanley Park!). With tools like climate control, and making use of vertical space, greenhouses can

grow 10 to 20 times the amount of vegetables on the same area as a field-based farm, and they can extend the growing year.



They conserve water:
Here's one thing you won't find in a greenhouse: soil. Your cucumbers, tomatoes, peppers and lettuce are grown hydroponically in biodegradable mediums like sawdust and coconut fibre. This lets farmers keep nutrients where they belong - at a plant's roots. Some other ways greenhouses practice water conservation include using computerized watering systems to deliver the exact amount of water needed without wasting it, collecting rainwater, and re-claiming water for reuse.

They use little to no pesticides - and zero herbicides:
The veggies that are greenhouse grown are herbicide-free...and growers use little to no pesticides. So how do they get their plants looking so perfect? One way is Integrated Pest Management: using ladybugs and other "good bugs" to get rid of harmful pests. This is not a recent development - from 1987 onwards, almost 100% of greenhouse growers have been using biological pest controls.

The long harvesting year means more stable local farming jobs:
BC greenhouses produce 10 months out of the year (and, using lighting, some produce veggies year-round!). That long harvest means you can enjoy local veggies most of the year, and there's a human element too: it means that the people who work on the farms have secure, virtually year-round jobs in a safe working environment. Growers live and work in their communities, so it's no wonder they're so committed to sustainable practices! They also live less than a day's drive from the majority of the markets they serve.

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Want to support locally grown greenhouse veggies? Check the produce section of your local grocery store - just look for the farms and labels listed here and learn more of the science behind greenhouses here at the BC Greenhouse Grower's Association website.

Photo credit: BC Greenhouse Growers' Association