

## Permaculture in Practice

# Add life to old pane

At least we now know for sure that things will likely get worse before they get better. For my entire life up until Nov. 2, 2004, ultimately, I always fell on the optimistic side of the question. Now that attitude almost seems naïve.

Fortunately my newfound knowledge has already shifted into motivation. The state of the world, and its recent ratcheting compel me at a greater rate to work to help build an alternative to the conventional dependence we have on multinational food conglomerates. This not only means having a killer edible garden through every growing season, it also means having a decent edible garden throughout the entire year.

For most folks the best first step toward providing a family's worth of fresh vegetables in every season is to build a few cold frames. Picture any bottomless box (usually made out of wood, but straw bales work, too) with glazing (e.g., glass, fiberglass, plastic, etc) on top. The north side of the box is always slightly higher

than the south side. This provides adequate drainage of rain and snow.

Hinge your glazing to your box, or at least make sure your glazing is easily removable, because you will not only want easy access for harvesting, but you will also want to be able to vent your cold frame on sunny days. Tacking wood strips on the bottom of the box prevents rotting. If you replace the strips whenever they begin to seriously rot, you can keep the box intact for years without painting, staining, or otherwise "treating" that would ultimately pollute your sacred soil.

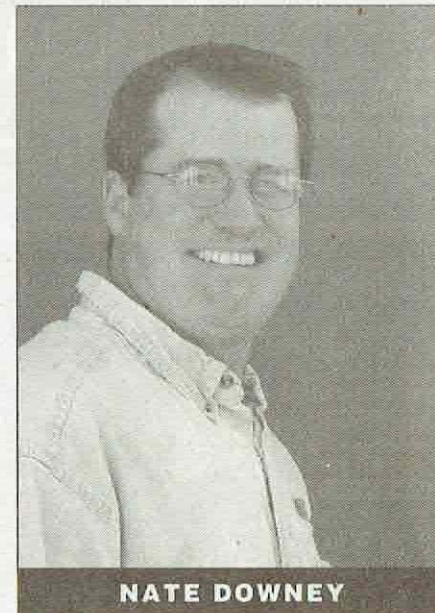
Please find a more detailed builder's guide below. For more information read Eliot Coleman's Four-Season Harvest or check his web site at [www.fourseasonfarm.com](http://www.fourseasonfarm.com).

First, take an old window and build a square frame out of hardwood to fit underneath. The dimensions of your window will determine the size of the box. Cut the sideboards along a diagonal connecting the front and the back boards.

Nail or screw the four boards together.

Attach 2x2 wood "rot proofing" strips to the sloped side of your box and flip it upside down. Next, cut two notches, front and back, to fit a 2x2 brace in the center of the box. Then lay the window on top of the frame in the garden and attach it with two heavy-duty hinges. Face the sloped glazing to the south.

For venting, find a prop, which can be as simple as two wood stakes placed under the front corners of the glazing, or fabricate a notched piece of wood that holds up the window frame. Adding a thermometer to gauge the inside temperature is helpful on those hot days and cold nights we get often get in winter. According to Coleman, a good rule of thumb is that most cold crops prefer daytime temperatures of 70 degrees in the spring and 60-65 degrees in the fall and winter. Many cold crops, he says, can freeze at night as long as they are able to thaw during the day, and as long as you don't harvest them when frozen.



**NATE DOWNEY**

Make sure to close your cold frame at night and on very cold nights consider insulating your box with anything available; a blanket, straw or bags of mulch are all usually sufficient to keep your happy, healthy, independent lifestyle thriving.

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