

Dear Friends and Members,

As one of the founding members of Idaho's Bounty Co-op, Inc. and partner with James and Leslee Reed in Onsen Winter Gardens, I would like to take this opportunity to clarify the current status of the Greenhouse project and our expectations and hopes for the future.

The production of fresh produce through the winter months has been a high priority for IBC since its founding in 2007. Dark leafy greens are essential to a healthy diet. In addition, their production and sale by the Co-op provides a strong incentive for members and non-members alike to support the Co-op in our efforts to provide a year round local food supply. Currently, demand far outstrips our current supply capabilities. As well, some members, finding the greens unavailable early in the order cycle, do not continue to purchase other items. We strongly encourage you to support the Co-op by purchasing other food items while we work hard to increase production. These early months in the Co-op's development are critical toward building a sustainable and secure local food shed.

In September of 2008 Onsen Winter Gardens negotiated for the rental of two geothermal greenhouses in Hagerman owned by the Archibalds. Along with a third greenhouse owned and financed personally by James and Leslee we now have access to approximately 5000 square feet of growing space. With such limited space we made the decision early on that our first year would be experimental in nature. Accordingly we have



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planted a wide variety of crops in one greenhouse, focused on greens production in the second and dedicated the third to warm season crops like tomatoes. In accordance with IBC standards we grow using organic methods and do not use pesticides or chemical fertilizers.

Low fertility soils almost guaranteed we would have lower production the first year but it was our late start that has proved to be the bigger factor.

Even with heat plants do not grow well without daylight, which is virtually non-existent during the months of December and January. More importantly to our current shortfall, we discovered belatedly that not only do plants grow poorly in low light conditions, something we expected, they also germinate very poorly, a fact that was unexpected. Thus our seeding done in mid-December and early January that would have provided greens now, was unsuccessful. This along with insect issues and the worst fog in a decade have tested our abilities. Fortunately, we now have a much better understanding of the process and anticipate a much more productive season next year.

Our experience this year has convinced us that we can succeed. To do so however, we must first retain the use of the greenhouses and hopefully add more of them to our mix. We are beginning now to prepare for next year's plantings, and attract the financing for needed infrastructure and operational expenses. We are currently in the process of developing a business plan for the project and will be talking to the Archibalds about using the facility going forward.

Commercial geothermal facilities are extremely rare and cannot be purchased easily or cheaply. Food production by the same token is not a lucrative use of greenhouse space. To move forward in a meaningful way without an unsustainable debt expense will require the combined resources, both financial and creative, of the entire membership. The 30,000 dollars we have invested of our own limited funds may be enough to prove viability but falls far short of the investment needed to secure this or another similar resource for our food-shed.

We are excited to move forward in this adventure. If you wish to comment or offer suggestions, you can email me at this email account: kbweston@gmail.com.

Thank you, Kelley Weston Onsen Farm: Winter Gardens

Imagine . . .

Knowing where your food comes from, who is producing it, and their ethics and farming practices

Working in support of the health of your local community food shed where energy stays local and supports our rural economy

