As part of our research project entitled, Horticultural crop management and cultivar selection in northern Ontario, we have been investigating the use of plasticulture for warm-season vegetable crops in northern Ontario. A small trial was started in 1999, comparing a red plastic mulch to a black mulch and a control for Sunstart tomato. In previous years, none of the plasticulture treatments, including mulching with black and IRT mulches, improved the earliness of harvest. The purpose of this trial is to investigate the effects of a red colored mulch on the earliness and yield of fresh market tomatoes. The results for 1999 are currently being evaluated.

In the summer of 1999, we experienced an early spring, high temperatures and accumulated a total of 2800 CHU (May 1 - Sept 30) which is even higher than 1998. Rainfall was often deficient, but heavy dews were common. Septoria and early blight were severe this year causing defoliation relatively early in the season.