

GREENHOUSES

So many folks seem to own their own greenhouses now, but do you know how to take care them to get the maximum use from them? Here are some tips for greenhouse owners or those people thinking of getting one.

A greenhouse can be anything from a lean-to or tunnel made of plastic to a sunny windowed back or front porch, or just a bay window. Or you may want a much more elaborate greenhouse with heaters, fans, ventilation systems, and a water supply. The type of greenhouse you get depends on what you plan to do with it.

Do you want a greenhouse to over-winter your plants that would not be able to withstand the temperatures outside? Do you want to start your seeds of annuals and vegetables so they can be set out as soon as our weather permits? Or would you like to grow specialty plants such as cacti or orchids that can't be grown outdoors because of our growing conditions? It is uplifting to be able to go into a greenhouse on a dreary January day and see green and flowering plants.

Whichever type you have or plan on having, they all need care and attention. All the panes or panels should be kept clean to allow the maximum amount of light in, especially during the months when we don't get much sunlight such as winter.

Open doors or vents on mild, sunny days to just let the fresh air circulate and air it out. Clean up ALL dead, decaying, dying material such as leaves or plants that didn't make it. Get rid of them before they cause a disease problem. Check all cuttings that are being wintered over, especially check geraniums for leaf removal. Water sparingly on cold, dull or foggy weather days and keep an eye out for aphids and white fly. Use the yellow sticky traps and be sure to replace them when needed. Check the undersides of leaves frequently for unwanted guests. Pest are easy to control if you work on the problem as soon as it begins instead of waiting until it is out of control.

If you have a heated greenhouse, you can start your vegetables in February and have them ready to set out as soon as the soil warms up around the first part of May. You can also do annuals, such as marigolds and coleus the same way.

It is also important where you place your greenhouse. It needs to be where it will get the most sun, not under trees where falling branches can cause damage. It is nice to put it fairly close to the house, so it is easily accessible and easier to put in lights and water. The framework can either be aluminum, wood, galvanized iron or PVC pipe. Aluminum is very lightweight and strong and doesn't need painting. Nor does it rot or warp.

You can draw your own plans, buy a plan or even buy a pre-fabricated greenhouse. When you choose your greenhouse, decide first of all how large you want it to be. Will you want work benches in it? If you decide on benches on both sides, you will need it to be at least eight feet wide so you will have room to work. Check out several different companies or catalogues before you choose what you want. A greenhouse can fill up pretty quickly and you may wish you had a bigger one.

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