

Greenhouse Gardening

Few personal joys can match the feeling of owning a home, and tending your little piece of the world. Most homes have a yard in the front, back, or both. Many have flowerbeds and landscaping plants in place, and homeowners are free to make changes to enhance the beauty of his or her property. Gardening is a relaxing and rewarding hobby, and greenhouse gardening offers a new dimension to this favorite pastime.

Take a good look

at your property. If you really want to build a greenhouse but you're not sure if you have the space to commit to a freestanding structure, consider attaching a greenhouse as an addition to your home.

The first thing

to do when planning your greenhouse is to measure the area. Be sure that the location you choose is exposed to enough sunlight, and also have an adequate amount of shade. Observe your property at different times of the day to determine the best location for your greenhouse.

Ventilation

systems are essential for greenhouses, as they provide not only warmth and air circulation, but also carbon dioxide for the plants and sufficient oxygen for the gardener. Further, a heating system is an absolute must for greenhouses located in cold climates. Find out exactly what sort of heating and ventilation systems will be required before you proceed with the construction of your greenhouse. If you are installing a heater, you have a choice of gas, oil or electricity as the fuel. Choose the fuel that's most accessible and cost-efficient for your needs. Electric heaters can easily provide enough warmth for a relatively small greenhouse, but remember that water and electricity don't mix. Be very careful when choosing where to place your electric heaters.

While artificial

elements can meet some of your plants' needs, nothing can compare to the benefits of natural sunlight. Plants need the sun to grow, so you have to be careful in choosing the material for your greenhouse panels. Ask an expert or research to find out what materials are best to create the roof and windows of your greenhouse. Glass has long been the traditional choice of material for greenhouse panels, but research has shown that glass can allow harmful rays, which may actually damage or kill the plants. Panels made of plastic film or Plexiglas are better options for filtering sunlight.

Think about the types of plants you'll be growing, as

that will have a factor in your greenhouse gardening requirements. Annual flowers, orchids, fruits, vegetables and cacti may all have unique temperature, moisture or irrigation needs. Ideally, your greenhouse will be designed to provide optimal conditions for a variety of plants. Just because you love cacti today doesn't mean that you won't want to grow tomatoes next year. Visit your garden center to read the requirements posted on individual plant tags, or seek advice from trusted sources.

When

you've done your research and you know all of the requirements, you have two options available to you. Draw the design, visit a supplier and build the greenhouse yourself, or hire a landscape architect or contractor to draw up the plans and take care of the construction. Paying a professional is not an option for many homeowners, but it's hard to know where to start with such a huge project. Look at gardening magazines for ideas and

inspiration, or drive around the neighbourhood and speak directly with someone who has a greenhouse on their property.

Before you begin

construction, be sure to first prepare the soil. This is to enclose the area in case there are established plants in place. Purchase all of the essential equipment and supplies for your greenhouse. Equipment can be purchased at most gardening centers. Stock up on supplies, and make sure that you have a storage area handy for them.

Budget greenhouse

gardeners can begin by erecting the basic structure, then improving it over time. For example, once you have a secure greenhouse with proper heat, ventilation, lighting and soil, you might want to add a hydroponics system. When you have the time and money available, the soil used in your greenhouse gardening can be removed and replaced by channels. Water mixed with nutrients runs through the channels to feed the plants.

Many

farmers are now increasing crop production by using hydroponics.

Finally,

buy a lock for your greenhouse and keep it secure at all times, to keep children from wandering in to a potentially dangerous situation.

The

potential to enhance your property and increase its value are practically limitless. Manicured lawns and landscaped gardens can beautify your grounds, but adding a greenhouse really makes your home stand out. Learn more about greenhouse gardening and you'll find it's an affordable way to hone your gardening skills, while incorporating a sunny new addition to your home.