



GROW YOUR OWN VEG – GREENHOUSE GUIDE.

If you're serious about growing veg – and you've got the space – a greenhouse should be high on your gardening agenda. Addison Ousebank can reveal exactly what to consider before splashing out.

A greenhouse opens up a whole new world of gardening to grow your own enthusiasts. The most exciting aspect is probably the opportunity to raise tender fruits and vegetables, such as aubergines, cucumbers,



grapes, melons, peppers and tomatoes which often struggle outdoors. It also allows other crops including potatoes and lettuces to be grown out of season, to be harvested when they are being sold at premium prices in the supermarkets. Whatever the reason for purchasing one of these structures, it's important to choose carefully as they can represent a substantial financial investment.

Greenhouses trap the sun's energy, which raises the temperature inside to create a protected environment where plants can flourish. For the best results they should be positioned in a sunny, sheltered spot well away from large trees and buildings – these cast shade and falling branches and autumn leaves could be a potential problem. Both types of structure can be erected on hard surfaces, such as concrete. Alternatively, stand them on bare earth or grass but make sure the land is firm, level and well-drained – the latter is essential if plants are going to be grown directly in the soil. Also bear in mind that most greenhouses will need secure anchorage for the side walls.



If possible, have the greenhouse ridge running from east to west so that one long side always faces the sun. However, the exact orientation is not essential and it's better to focus on making the best use of space on your plot. Try to leave plenty of room around the perimeter of any structure for cleaning and maintenance. Access to mains water and electricity is also a definite advantage.



Greenhouse options;

Freestanding: Traditional building in either aluminum or timber which can be situated in almost any location within the garden. Fully glazed from top to bottom allowing maximum light penetration. These are ideal if you are going to focus on growing tall fruit and vegetables such as tomatoes and cucumbers. Some timber free standing models offer shading panels to the lower sections for areas which require shading. A mixture of these can be very advantageous.

Freestanding Dwarf Wall: Traditional buildings in either aluminum or cedar (timber) adapted to have a solid brick wall to bench height. As the bricks heat up during the day they will also help keep the greenhouse warm as they release the heat overnight. Most manufactures offer these modifications for a small one off fee.

Timber / Cedar Framed: Timber greenhouses offer better heat retention and reduce heating costs over the winter. Cedar or pressure treated frames also have a long life without the need of maintenance and treatment. They are easy to add in shelves or any other fixtures which may be required by screwing them into the timber framing.

Lean-to; Offer the benefit of having the wall they are against retaining the heat of the day with a slow release overnight. Ideal for limited space gardens. The downside is that they can tend to get very hot during the summer months and would recommend the installation of automatic roof and louvre vents to keep the temperatures down.



Accessories:



Auto Roof & Louvre Vents: If you spend a lot of time away from home and prevent serious damage to the plants inside, automatic roof and louvre vents are well worth considering. They will open and close when the temperature reaches certain points. Allowing cool air in through the low level louvres and hot air out through the roof vents.

Bubble Wrap / Insulite Panels; These are ideal for over wintering plants. Bubble wrap will require fixing to all internal surfaces whereas insulate panels can be slotted into the framing to be re-used year after year. The panels also let more light in during the winter days which helps the greenhouse warm up.



Staging & Shelving; Greenhouse organization will help utilize every bit of space by using things like pot holders, seed tray holders, fold down shelves which can be fixed to the frame work. Having a place for everything and everything in its place will make your greenhouse experience much more satisfying.



Rainwater; Rainwater is nature's way to water the plants. Most greenhouse models have built in gutter systems which an adaptor can be purchased to channel this water into a water butt for use within the greenhouse or around the garden.

Flooring; Greenhouse flooring is also very important. An all-concrete, slabbed or gravel area is fine if you only use grow bags and containers, or have staging on both sides of the structure. Alternatively, you can opt for a central path with border soil on either side for growing plants – but always practice crop rotation to avoid the build-up of soil pests and diseases.

If you require more help and advice please do not hesitate to contact Addison Ousebank on 01234 825106. Willow Vale, Pavenham Road, Oakley, Bedford. MK43 7SZ. (Open: Monday – Saturday 9.00am to 5.00pm) Closed Sundays.

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