

Greenhouse gardening

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maintain the humid atmosphere that orchids demand and most plants prefer.

Shading is an important factor since most plants want "dappled light," or indirect light. Even if the greenhouse is shaded by deciduous trees in the summer, shading is frequently necessary after February until the deciduous trees have come into leaf.

Leaf scorch is frequently seen in early spring if there is no shading. During the summer in some exposures it is imperative to have controlled shading to protect plants from intense sun rays. The use of aluminum roll-up, roll-down shades are generally recommended. The shades are mounted on the outside. Although they are more costly than other means of shading, this type is the most practical in the long run.

Continual air movement, another important factor in plant growth, can be provided by a strategically placed fan. The wet pad evaporative cooler can also be used as a fan without the cooling effect, during times of the year when the weather is not too cold for opening the cooler vent.

High humidity, essential to superior plant growth, can be provided by either a very simple manual device or a totally automatic one. A small home-size humidifier, a misting nozzle attached to a hose, or an auto-

matic self-contained unit are available. Many people find it quite satisfactory to water the floor and under the bench and then allow the moisture to rise.

How much time does a greenhouse require? The amount of leisure time you have and the extent of your interest will determine the time you will spend on your new hobby. Some people devote as little as 15 minutes every other day and others spend several hours of creative gardening daily.

Another facet of greenhouse gardening is how the structure will affect property values. Although you are building the greenhouse for your own pleasure, a home greenhouse definitely enhances the property value. At the time of resale, the greenhouse will help sell the house to a real gardener, of whom there are a growing number.

The first advice to prospective greenhouse owners is to build a greenhouse as large as possible. A small greenhouse will look tremendous for a while, but as your hobby expands, you'll regret not having built a larger one. The cost of a greenhouse and equipment does not double as the size is doubled.

The major costs of a greenhouse are the masonry, heating, plumbing and electricity, and they will be the same whether you build a fine or a poor greenhouse.

There is no good rule of thumb

on how to estimate the cost of a greenhouse. There are too many variables. By contacting a local professional greenhouse representative and discussing your greenhouse ideas with him, you can then get a true perspective of the total cost of your individual greenhouse.

It's safe to assume that the construction of a greenhouse usually costs about the same as a new room of comparable size, if not done by the owner.

—MARGE ALPERN

Water early

Maybe worms aren't exactly your cup of tea. But when it comes to watering the garden, being an early bird pays off.

Foliage that remains wet for long periods of time is extremely susceptible to disease, warn Michigan State University Extension horticulturists. Plants watered late in the day tend to remain wet through the night, giving disease organisms a long time to get established.

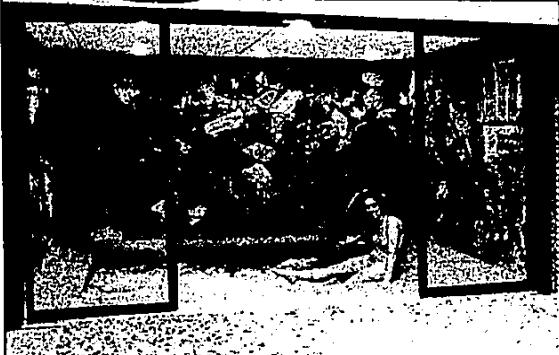
Plants watered early in the day, however, soon dry off, minimizing the chance that infection will occur.

April 27, 1978

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Actual Proof

In testimony given before the Michigan Public Service Commission, Case number U-5272, March 16, 1977, it was revealed that through actual tests in 200 Michigan homes, the average savings with an automatic damper was 23.64%. More than that, of the 5 different devices and concepts tested, the automatic damper system gave the highest percentage of savings.

The device is an automatic damper, the electronically closes the flue whenever the furnace flame is off. Researchers estimate 50 percent of furnace heat escapes up the chimney. Preliminary results of a limited testing program conducted by the utility during the 1975-76 winter, show that homeowners may be able to save as much as 26 percent of normal gas consumption.

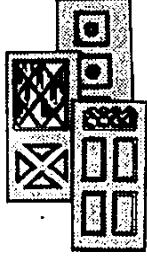
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