

A Gardener's Dream: His Own Greenhouse

Almost every gardener reaches a point where he wants a greenhouse of his own. Before building one, decide how much money you want to spend and how much work you want to do, says J. Lee Taylor, Michigan State University horticulturist.

A hobby greenhouse can range from a simple polyethylene-covered frame-work that you can put together in an afternoon for less than \$50 to a \$5,000 fully automated conservatory. Basically, there are two types of greenhouses: attached and freestanding. An attached greenhouse may be even-span, lean-to, or window-mounted. A freestanding greenhouse is usually even-spanned (symmetrical roof).

The best location for a greenhouse is the south or southeast side of the house in a sunny spot. Second choice is the east side where it will capture the most sunlight in February. The north side is the least desirable location.

An ideal site is well-drained, nearly level, and has full exposure to the sunlight. It should slope slightly to the south and have a windbreak on the side of the prevailing wind.

The width of your greenhouse is the most important dimension. It will be changed during the life of the

greenhouse. Length can be increased if more space is desired. The height of the greenhouse depends on the desired height to the eaves. An eave height of five feet is satisfactory for side benches with low-growing plants. If you want to grow taller plants, an eave height of six or seven feet is needed.

The supporting framework of greenhouses can be made of wood, aluminum, iron, or galvanized pipe. Some have curved sides and others have flat eaves. Some are glass or plastic from the ground up. All types have advantages and disadvantages.

If you build your own greenhouse, have the plumbing and electrical work done by professionals in accordance with local codes. Most local governments require a building permit to erect a greenhouse.

Glass is the traditional

greenhouse covering; however, fiber glass, plastic, and polyethylene are becoming popular. Each has advantages and disadvantages which would be checked before deciding which best suits your purposes.

You can heat the greenhouse efficiently with gas, oil or electricity. Heating equipment can be a space heater, a forced-air heater, a hot-water or steam system, or electric heaters. Radiant heat lamps over plants and a soil heating cable under plants can also be used. Consider the initial cost, economy of operation, and availability of fuel when deciding which method of heating you want.

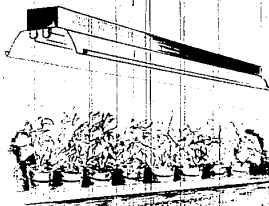
Ventilation equipment should be built into your greenhouse to control temperatures in all seasons. Even during cold weather a greenhouse can get too warm

on bright, sunny days. When protection from the sun is needed, use roll-up screens of wood or aluminum. Vinyl plastic shading or paint-on materials. An evaporative cooler eliminates excessive heat and adds humidity to the greenhouse atmosphere.

Closed greenhouses often have too little carbon dioxide (CO₂) during the day to effectively utilize available light. By increasing the amount of CO₂ plant growth can be accelerated.

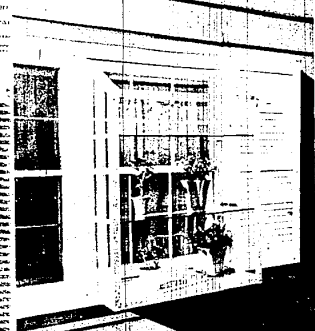
Inexpensive colorimetric kits are available for determining the CO₂ levels in your greenhouse. Bottled CO₂ dry ice or burned sulfur-free gaseous fuels, such as natural gas, can be used to increase the amount of CO₂ in your greenhouse.

Most plants will grow in either natural or artificial light. Three basic types of lamps are used: fluorescent lamps,

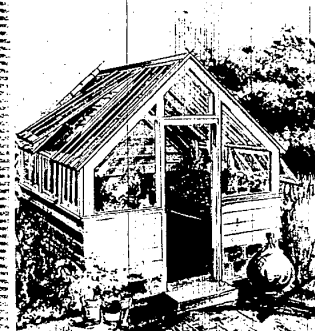


FLUORESCENT lamp is one of the three types of artificial lighting used for growing plants indoors.

incandescent lamps, and high-intensity discharge lamps. For precise information on building a hobby greenhouse, contact the MSU Bulletin Office, P.O. Box 231, East Lansing, Mich. 48824, and ask for Bulletin AIB 357, "Building a hobby greenhouse, Hobby Greenhouses."



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BEST LOCATION for a greenhouse is the south or southeast side of the house in a sunny spot.

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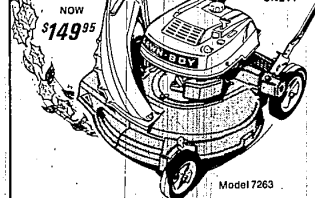
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