



*Photo courtesy of mrrbooks*

## **GARDENING IN A GREENHOUSE**

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If you have gardened for any length of time, there comes a point when having a greenhouse looks better and better. Gardening is such a therapeutic activity and having a greenhouse allows this therapy to go on daily, even during the winter months when it is too wet and cold to work outside.

Greenhouse styles are as varied as architectural designs of houses, and can be as simple as a plastic-enclosed, pole-supported structure or as elaborate (and pricey) as some companies advertise in many gardening publications. They can be a do-it-yourself project built from scratch or built from kits that include everything necessary. However, no matter what style of greenhouse is eventually put up, there are a few things to consider before beginning.

First, check into local regulations to learn if there are any restrictions regarding greenhouses. Permits may have to be obtained, and there may be certain types of foundations required and size restrictions. Electricity and water are required for optimum greenhouse operation, so make sure these are available.

Selecting a site for a greenhouse is the next important step. It should be placed in a location where there is maximum sunlight, or at the very least, six hours of direct sunlight a day; a southern exposure is preferred. If the greenhouse is used all year, sun exposure in the winter is important, so evergreen trees near or over the greenhouse are not recommended. However, deciduous trees can effectively shade a greenhouse from the intense late afternoon summer sun. In addition, placing the greenhouse in a level area makes constructing it much easier.

Glazing is the material used for letting sunlight into a greenhouse. This is usually glass or plastic and is usually the most expensive part. Avoid single-pane or single-thickness plastic glazing because the greenhouse will get too hot in summer and too cold in winter. Remember that cheaper does not always save money; cheaply-built structures can be ripped up on a windy day or destroyed by a hail storm.

Nothing takes the place of sunlight for optimum plant growth, but short winter days sometimes call for a supplemental light source. Fluorescent lights are preferred, but remember that they must be placed very close to a plant or seed tray for the best growing effect, so are not helpful for large, tall plants. Air circulation is important in a greenhouse to prevent fungal diseases and strengthen seedlings, so installing a fan or two is important. A heater on a timer is also sometimes necessary on very cold winter nights.

Of course, propagation benches are needed inside a greenhouse and these can be made of wire, wood or plastic. Sowing seeds and transplanting seedlings are done much easier on these benches and placement should be at a comfortable height.

Once the construction of a greenhouse is completed, just get in there and start propagating! Over time, you will learn what works well and which plants can be over-wintered inside. Gardening in a greenhouse is a wonderful activity and one that prolongs what we enjoy doing the most . . . gardening!

There is no Master Gardener class scheduled on Saturday, March 30<sup>th</sup>. Enjoy a bit of your holiday weekend in the garden, and have a Happy Easter! Mark your calendars: the annual Spring El Dorado County Master Gardener Plant Sale is coming on Saturday, May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2013. The Plant Sale will be in the Veterans Memorial Building parking lot, 130 Placerville Drive, in Placerville from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. There will be tomato plants galore, spring and summer annuals, interesting perennials and more – all tenderly raised by your county Master Gardeners. Don't miss it!

Master Gardeners are available to answer home gardening questions Tuesday through Friday, 9 a.m. to noon, by calling [\(530\) 621-5512](tel:5306215512). Walk-ins are welcome at our office, located at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. For more information about our public education classes and activities, go to our Master Gardener website at [http://ucanr.edu/sites/EDC\\_Master\\_Gardeners/](http://ucanr.edu/sites/EDC_Master_Gardeners/). Sign up to receive our online notices and e-newsletter at <http://ucanr.edu/mgenews/>. You can also find us on Facebook.