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TOP 9 Concerns When Building Your Greenhouse





You have decided to build a greenhouse, or buy a greenhouse kit, but do you know the questions you should really be concerned about? Following is the top 9 concerns you should consider first.

1) What style of greenhouse will you build?

Will it be freestanding (as the picture above) or will it be attached to the side of a building or your home? Will it be curved, straight eave, arch style, dome? Mostly the difference in the styles is an issue of looks, but there are some differences that will also affect the pricing. Many people think that a lean to or attached greenhouse will be less expensive because there are only 3 sides. That is not true. A dome greenhouse is going to be much more labor intensive to build, but it will be less expensive to heat or cool as it has less surface area than a traditional gabled greenhouse. Pit greenhouses, or walipini's are also becoming popular, but you cannot build them in areas that flood. Also, you have the issue of keeping them dry, much as you would have with a basement. Most people will end up with a traditional gable end style. These are available sometimes with a curved eave, or different roof pitches, so it is easy to get a style that will match nicely with your home.

2) Where will you locate the greenhouse?

Standard practices have been to locate the greenhouse with the gable ends on the north and south side, so that your long

roof sides will get the morning and afternoon sun. More and more people are going with a solar style greenhouse now. They are building a heat retaining north wall and sloping their greenhouse so that the roof is facing to the south for maximum heat. Which of these will suit your needs? Keep in mind though, that you can have a greenhouse even if you don't have the perfect location. There are ways to adjust for location such as supplemental lighting if you are not getting enough natural light. Also, when considering location you should keep in mind that you may need/want utilities (water, electricity, natural gas, propane) to your greenhouse. Are you able to get these to the location you are considering?

3) What size greenhouse will you build?

If you have plants already, the simplest way to do this is to lay out your plants in the yard in a configuration like they would be placed on your benches or on the ground in your greenhouse. If not, you can lay it out on paper to help. Consider this, most people purchase or build a greenhouse that they think is the minimum they need. They soon find that it is not large enough. It is suggested to go up one size from what you think you will need.

4) What type of foundation will you build?

Are you doing a hoop house that will go directly onto the ground? Or, are you building a more permanent structure (especially glass greenhouses) that will require a foundation? If you are in a location with a freeze/thaw cycle you should follow best local building practices for a foundation for your greenhouse. Also, you should consider the fact that you may be required to get a building permit for your structure. Check with local authorities before purchasing any materials or kit if you are not sure. I have seen HOA associations and city permitting offices make people take down their greenhouse after it is up. Best to check on this first.

5) What roof slope will you need?

Most kits have a minimum pitch that they will build to. If you are using your own materials and building a diy greenhouse, the minimum roof pitch for polycarbonate is 5 degrees, or about a 1 on 12 roof slope. If you are in a high snow area, be sure to check what snow loads you will need and build the structure to meet these. If you are building your own there are charts available with snow load information to help you design your greenhouse. Some of the kits will have engineering available and they will be able to meet even the highest of snow loads.

6) What materials will you use?

Will you have a polyfilm, polycarbonate or glass greenhouse? There is a big difference in the pricing and the durability of these 3 materials. Most polyfilm has a 4 year UV protection. Some overwinter materials only have a 1 year UV protection. But, the biggest thing about polyfilm is if it gets a tear you may have to replace it. There is a tape to repair a tear, if you find it in time. There is also a reinforced polyfilm with a rip stop feature so that a tear can only go so far before it is stopped. Multiwall polycarbonate has a 10 - 20 year warranty depending on the manufacturer. It also has a 10 year warranty against hail damage as a general rule. Some people do not like the multiwall polycarbonate as you will not get a clear view like looking out of a glass window. Although there are now polycarbonate greenhouses available with a see through polycarbonate. This polycarbonate however will not have as long a warranty as the multiwall material. Glass will virtually last forever if it is not broken. Will your frame be aluminum, steel or wood? Personally, I opt for maintenance free materials, so I prefer not to use wood. But you can use cedar or redwood, both of which will hold up to the elements for a long time.





7) Do you need a lot of insulation?

Are you going to heat your greenhouse? Are you growing tomatoes that will require a temperature of around 60 inside, or are you simply growing crops that need protection from the frost? A higher temperature will require a heater with a higher BTu rating. There is a formula to calculate the size of heater you will need. It is based on the size of the greenhouse, the R factor of the covering you are using and the temperature difference between inside the greenhouse and outside. The insulation factor of multiwall polycarbonate is an advantage over a glass greenhouse in this instance. It will cost much less to heat a polycarbonate greenhouse. Plus the multi layers will help to eliminate potential hot spots from the roofing.

8) How are you going to set up the inside of your greenhouse?

Are you going to have benches? How deep will the benches be? We suggest a maximum of 3' deep for outside benches. A bench in a center aisle may be up to 4'. Or, are you going to have raised beds inside the greenhouse with paths between? Keep in mind that you may want to bring a wheel barrow or other equipment into the greenhouse. What flooring will you use? Will it be ground cover with gravel over top of it? Or, will it be intricate pavers as the example below.



9) Are you (or your neighbors) concerned about looks?

Do you have an HOA? You should always check with them first before you even start the process. Glasshouses will give the most traditional greenhouse look. Polyfilm greenhouses will work wonderfully, but the looks are not quite as refined as a glass greenhouse. Of course this is always dependent on the neighborhood and location. Just be sure to ask.





Consider the answer to all of the above questions before you start your quest for your greenhouse. If you need any help, or have additional questions, you can always reach us at www.advancegreenhouses.com, 877-238-8357

