

My Greenhouse Story

By Wendy Kubow

Due to lack of space, I had never done any serious or extensive gardening until I retired from the Bay Area. It was a dream come true to retire on a 10-acre parcel of land in Valley Springs where my husband and I would have a chance to try to raise some animals and grow a garden. After installing 8 raised garden beds, I wanted to add a greenhouse to my garden area, so that I could raise my own vegetables from seed. I had been warned that frosts in Valley Springs could occur as late as May, so I wanted to protect the seedlings from these harsh temperatures.

After researching available greenhouses, I decided on a medium-priced one that I thought would serve my purpose. I made the purchase online, and the greenhouse arrived in boxes, ready to assemble. It took about 3 days for my husband and me to level the ground and install the frame and get the kit put together. The dimensions were 8 x 16', it had a front and back sliding door, and 4 roof vents. My husband ran an electrical line to it and installed an outlet box attached to a 4 x 4 post so I could heat or light the greenhouse as needed. I was ready to go.

I planted my seeds in dirt cubes that I made from a soil block maker, placed them in flat containers and put those on top of gardening heating pads that were on the tables in my greenhouse. At night, I would turn on a space heater set to 45 degrees, turn on the heating pads that would keep the seedlings soil a toasty 70 degrees, close the greenhouse and go back to the house. This all went well until it rained hard one night. I went in the next morning to find some of my seedling trays flooded and my dirt cubes having a melt-down. The rainwater had wicked down the screws that held the frame pieces of the greenhouse together. I saved as many plants as I could and re-positioned the trays so that the rainwater that dripped down offending screws would not land in my trays. Once the rains passed, I used caulk to plug up the holes with about a 70% success rate for the next season. But I also was having trouble with the sliding doors. They would stick or come off their tracks, despite our work to level them. I learned to live with all these inconveniences though and continued to house my starts in the structure.

After a particularly vigorous rainstorm, I came out to turn the space heater off for the day and pop the vents, only to find one of the green house doors on the ground. Wow, I thought, this time it fell completely off. I picked up the door and headed to the greenhouse, but something was drastically wrong. There was a mostly empty space where the greenhouse should be and rubble on the ground...my greenhouse pieces! That was where some of it went, but the entire back wall had blown into a nearby tree. There it sat in all its twisted glory. The greenhouse was completely trashed.

This was, of course, very disappointing and expensive, but I didn't give up. I purchased another greenhouse at a fraction of the cost which included a simple metal hoop-house style framework and a translucent fitted tarp. The installation was easy-breezy, taking only a little over an hour to erect. Exact leveling was not critical and it fit snugly around the frame, had bottom vents plus a front door and back window that zipped closed. The first time I checked my seedlings during hard rain, I stood there amazed. Not a single drop of water entered the structure!

If you are thinking of getting a greenhouse, I hope you can learn from my mistake. Keeping it simple turned out to work best. My new greenhouse is only 8 x 8 which is plenty of room for as many seedlings as I can use. Green housing is a great way to get a head start on spring planting! Happy gardening!

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