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Avid gardeners may be enticed by the idea of a greenhouse that allows them to explore their passion for plants year-round. While it’s true that greenhouses afford this luxury, there are important things to consider before erecting a greenhouse in your yard.

Greenhouses require ample time to maintain. Greenhouses are not self-managing; they require heat, water, venting, electricity, and maintenance on the part of gardeners. Individuals need to determine how much time they have to devote to a greenhouse and then consider their options.

Start by choosing the size of the greenhouse. Many experts, like those at the home and garden information site The Spruce, suggest getting the largest one you can afford and fit into the yard. It is much easier to fill a large greenhouse than try to expand on a small one later on.

Next, consider whether you want to build the greenhouse from scratch or utilize a prefabricated kit that can make easier work of the job. Kits typically contain all of the materials needed, and are easiest for someone who is a construction novice. Look for “grower greenhouses,” which are all-purpose options with adjustable shelving and space for growing plants full-term.

The next step is deciding where the greenhouse will be located. The goal is to have a consistent amount of sunlight year-round. A south-facing locale is ideal, and structures should remain north of the greenhouse so they do not cast a shadow on it. The building, cars and technology resource Popular Mechanics advises gardening enthusiasts to take into consideration the angle of the sun during all seasons before choosing a location. Doing so ensures that the sun is not obscured in the winter or fall.

Select a spot that also has ample drainage, as you will not want water pooling up along the sides of or underneath the greenhouse. Raise the greenhouse on footings to alleviate flooding concerns.

Consult with a gardening or agriculture expert about the best way to heat the greenhouse. Options abound with electric-, gas- and propane-powered heating sources. Some systems will require venting. You also will need to know what is available and legal in your area. Check to see if you need a building permit for the greenhouse and any accompanying heating elements. Once the greenhouse is situated, you can begin to add other items, like benches, additional shelving, hooks for tools, and even an automated watering or misting system.

Greenhouses take commitment, but the reward is the chance to enjoy gardening all year long.
City dwellers may once have thought that gardening was a hobby for suburbanites or those living in rural areas. But urban gardening has grown in popularity as more and more city folk have looked for ways to increase their access to healthy, low-cost produce. Urban agriculture may seem like a relatively new idea, but National Geographic notes that it actually dates back to the 19th century, when Detroit mayor Hazen Pingree devised a plan to help the city’s unemployed laborers during a period of economic crisis. Mayor Pingree developed an idea to use acres of vacant and idle lands throughout the city to create subsistence gardens. Begun in 1894, the program would peak in 1897 with the participation of more than 1,500 families. The program would taper off by 1901 as the economy improved, but there’s no denying the relative success of the mayor’s program.

Urban gardens can be just as beneficial today as they were in Detroit in the late 19th century. However, the Environmental Protection Agency notes that some sites that are now home to urban gardens were once occupied by industrial and commercial operations. That’s a significant concern for those who want to start urban agriculture programs in their cities, as the soil might be contaminated. But the EPA says the possibility of contamination should not keep prospective urban gardeners from going forward with their plans. Rather, the EPA recommends gardeners take various steps if they determine the soil where they hope to plant an urban garden has been contaminated.

Consult your local and state environmental agencies. Local and state environmental agencies can help would-be urban gardeners connect with professional site cleanup specialists. These specialists can recommend various ways to reduce high levels of contaminants.

Build raised garden beds. The EPA notes that raised beds are the most common way to reduce the risk of coming into contact with soil contaminants. Raised beds use clean soil that couples with materials necessary to build the beds that serve as physical barriers between the plants and potential contaminants in the ground soil.

Employ soil amendments. Soil amendments can be used to bind contaminants so they are no longer mobile or bioavailable. A thick layer of organic material also serves as a barrier against potential contaminants.

Replace contaminated soil. Replace contaminated soil with soil that has been tested and confirmed as contaminant-free.

Phytotechnologies are another way to clean up contaminated soil, though the EPA notes that this approach can take years and won’t necessarily prove effective against every contaminant. Urban gardening gives city dwellers a chance to enjoy a wonderful hobby. When soil contaminants are effectively addressed, city residents can enjoy access to fresh, affordable produce grown right in their communities.
Heat waves are an inevitable part of summer in many places across the globe. While humans can escape indoors to air conditioned rooms when heat waves hit full swing, flowers planted around a property have no such luxury, putting their survival in jeopardy whenever the mercury rises to especially steamy heights.

Wilted flowers that have succumbed to the summer sun are a sight many gardening enthusiasts can recognize. But there are ways to keep flowers safe and vibrant during periods of extreme heat.

Water at the appropriate times of day. The National Gardening Association notes that it’s best to water in the early morning and evening because less water will be lost to evaporation during these times of day than during the afternoon, when temperatures tend to be at their hottest.

Choose the right watering method. It’s not just when but also how you water that can affect flowers during summer heat waves. Aboveground sprinklers might be great for lawns, but the NGA notes that such sprinklers can encourage the spread of disease on certain plants, including roses. Many gardening professionals recommend soaker hoses when watering flowers because they promote deep watering that can help the plants withstand the summer heat. If you must use an overhead watering system, set the timer so plants are watered in early in the morning or evening.

Routinely check the soil moisture. Soil moisture can help gardeners determine if their flowers have enough water to withstand the heat. The NGA advises gardeners to dig a 12-inch deep wedge of soil from their gardens to determine its moisture levels. If the top six inches of the soil is dry, water. If that area is still wet or moist, the plants have enough moisture to withstand the heat. Check these moisture levels more frequently during heat waves than other times of year.

Avoid overwatering. Novice gardeners may be tempted to water more frequently when they see wilted leaves on their flowers. But wilted leaves are not necessarily indicative of suffering plants. Plants release moisture to protect themselves from excessive heat, and that release of moisture can cause leaves to wilt as the plants try to protect themselves by providing less surface area that can be exposed to the sun. So long as soil moisture levels are healthy, the flowers should be fine, even if their leaves have wilted. No gardener wants to see their flowers succumb to the summer heat. Fortunately, there are many ways to help flowers survive heat waves.
Signs your soil might be compacted

Compacted soil can result from any number of activities, including walking on a lawn. When soil on a lawn is compacted, grass roots might not receive the water, oxygen and nutrients they need to grow in strong. The can lead to weak lawns that are vulnerable to various issues. However, homeowners need not avoid their lawns to prevent soil compaction. Rather, learning to recognize signs of soil compaction and paying special attention to heavily trafficked areas of the yard can help homeowners identify the problem early and address it before grass begins to suffer. Cooperative Extension, which is supported by the United States Department of Agriculture Extension, notes that the following are some sign potential indicators of compacted soil.

**Hard soil:** Soil that is difficult, if not impossible, to penetrate with a shovel is likely compacted. Even healthy soil is sometimes resistant to penetration, but if homeowners put some muscle into their efforts to penetrate the soil and still can’t do so, then the soil is compacted.

**Standing water:** Water standing on top of soil for a long time is doing so because the soil is likely so compacted that the water, which roots need to thrive, cannot get through.

**Excessive water runoff:** Runoff occurs when watering lawns. But if nearly all of the water intended for the lawn and the soil beneath it is seemingly being diverted away from the grass, then that means the water cannot get through to the soil or that so little is getting through that the lawn’s health is in jeopardy.

**Loss of vegetation or poor plant growth:** Compacted soil prevents water, nutrients and oxygen from accessing the root zone. As a result, plants, including trees, are vulnerable to disease and even death.

**Surface crust:** Surface crust, which blocks oxygen and water from penetrating the soil and tends to inflict areas like footpaths and playgrounds due to heavy foot traffic, contributes to runoff and soil erosion. Compacted soil is relatively simple to fix. But when untreated, compacted soil can threaten lawns, plants and other vegetation.

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**Home ownership classes are provided by the West Ohio Community Action Partnership**

Anyone wishing to attend the home ownership class must have submitted an application and been approved. Applications need to be received by West Ohio Community Action Partnership no later than two weeks before the start of the class.

For additional information contact the Home Ownership program at 419-227-2586

(Qualifications may vary with different programs.)
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**LIMA** Commercial property with 9,160 sq.ft. bldg. plus 2 story home divided into 3 units & vacant lot. Total of 1.05 ac on Pine St. near Market. #135 Chad Wright 419-236-7143/Ryan Staley 419-296-3787

**LIMA** .143 ac vacant commercial lot on the corner of Bellefontaine Rd & Dewey. #138 Randy Faulder 419-302-6455

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**FOSTORIA** Aprox. 2.5 ac of land on SR 309 w/ a fully heated Hoge bldg., large parking area/lot, & 30x70 shop floor w/ 14x11 office area. High traffic count for rural setting. #141 Devin Dye 419-303-5891

**FOSTORIA** Great investment property w/ historic charm consisting of 3 retail store fronts, 3-2BR apts & 1-1BR apt. Room to finish more apts. Recently remodeled. #142 Don Cochran 419-934-0651

**ALLEN EAST** .80 ac commercial vacant gravel lot w/ 212’ road frontage on Washington St. & 50’ in front of the City of Wapakoneta. Zoned commercial. #143 Devin Dye 419-303-5891

**BEAVERDALE** 37,000 sq.ft. brick commercial bldg. w/ apts., banquet room w/ stage, & kitchen. Ample parking. Minutes from I-75 & Lincoln Hwy. Endless potential! #156 Randy Faulder 419-302-6455

**PERRY** Aprox. 72.5 ac vacant commercial land on E. Breese Rd. between St. Johns & Greely Chapel Rd. Minutes from I-75. #161 Ron Spencer 419-230-1111

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**FOSTORIA 1.67 ac vacant commercial land ready for development, apx. 235’ road frontage on US 23/N. County Line Rd. #154 Don Cochran 419-934-0651

**FOSTORIA** Small, single story commercial bldg. on corner lot on Center St., Fostoria. Aprox. 1140 sq.ft., off street parking. #155 Don Cochran 419-934-0651

**BEAVERDALE** 37,000 sq.ft. brick commercial bldg. w/ apts., banquet room w/ stage, & kitchen. Ample parking. Minutes from I-75 & Lincoln Hwy. Endless potential! #156 Randy Faulder 419-302-6455

**PERRY** Aprox. 68.29 ac vacant commercial land in Perry Twp. Located at Breese Rd. & St. Johns. Zoned First Industrial Light. Aprox. 50 ac wooded. #165 Ron Spencer 419-230-1111

**NEW BLOOMINGTON** 18 hole golf course in Marion Co., SR 95 W. Inc. 2 houses: 2,088 sq. ft. 2 story home w/ main floor office space & 3BR ranch. Aprox. 71.43 acres. #168 Ron Spencer 419-230-1111

**FOSTORIA** 3 parcels on corner of Ebersole & Park incl. 2 bldgs. formerly used as sheet metal shop: 30x60 w/ att. garage & 24x48 w/ 2 overhead doors. Currently zoned R-2 Residential. #174 Don Cochran 419-934-0651

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How to identify poison ivy

Poison ivy is an unwelcome guest on many properties. Unfortunately, many people don’t recognize the presence of poison ivy on their property until it’s too late and they’ve already fallen victim to the uncomfortable, itchy red rash that is the plant’s hallmark. According to Poison-Ivy.org, a website providing information about poison ivy, poison oak and poison sumac, the rash from poison ivy may first appear as just a slight itchy spot. But that spot will gradually get worse and can even cover your entire body with giant red sores if left untreated or if it goes undetected for too long. That only highlights the importance of learning to recognize poison ivy on a property and taking the appropriate measures to prevent anyone from coming into contact with it.

Is all poison ivy the same? Many people may be surprised to learn that all poison ivy plants are not one and the same. Poison-Ivy.org notes that there are different types of poison ivy in different places, so curious homeowners should visit the site to determine how to identify the type of poison ivy specific to where they live. Eastern Poison Ivy grows on the ground, climbs and sometimes appears as a shrub. And despite its name, Eastern Poison Ivy grows from the east coast to the midwest, affecting people in middle American states like Kansas and Nebraska. Eastern Poison Ivy also can be found in some parts of Texas and Arizona.

What are some telltale signs of the poison ivy plant? Eastern Poison Ivy is the most widespread poison ivy plant, and these are some of its characteristics. (Note: People who live outside of regions where Eastern Poison Ivy grows can learn about the characteristics of plants in their area by visiting www.Poison-Ivy.org).

• Poison ivy plants always have leaves of three. No poison ivy plants have more than three leaves.
• Poison ivy always grow left, then right. That means that the stem/branch of leaves closest to the root of the plant will always lean left. Subsequent stems/branches of leaves can lean right.
• Stems/branches of poison ivy leaves are never side by side.
• Poison ivy plants never have thorns.
• The edges of poison ivy leaves are never saw-toothed or scalloped.
• Poison ivy leaves will appear differently depending on the season. In spring, Eastern Poison Ivy leaves will appear red. As spring turns into summer, the leaves will gradually appear more green. Come fall, the green leaves will look as if they were brushed with red, with some leaves featuring patches or spots of red. The poison ivy rash can be very uncomfortable. Learning to identify poison ivy plants can help people avoid the rash.

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Did you know?

Many people may be tempted to discard rusty tools that have gone unused and sat in a garage or shed for a significant period of time. But tools encrusted with rust do not need to be relegated to the trash bin, nor do gardeners have to toil for hours scraping and sanding off the rust. There’s a much easier way to restore rusty tools that relies on a common household ingredient: vinegar. Pour vinegar into a deep enough vessel to submerge the metal part of the tool. Soak the tool overnight. The next day, use a scouring pad to rub off the rust. If the tool is too big to fit into a can or bucket, simply wrap it with a vinegar-soaked rag and cover the whole tool with a tightly secured plastic bag. Follow the same procedure the next day. After all the rust is gone, rinse the tool in cool water and dry thoroughly. Then return it to regular usage.

How color can affect your garden

Flower gardens can add color and awe-inspiring appeal to a property. The National Gardening Association notes that gardeners can find nearly every color of the spectrum in flowering perennials. So whether you prefer soft pink, are partial to bright red or want to relax in a garden and gaze at something deep blue, chances are you’ll find a perennial to tickle your fancy.

The NGA offers the following breakdown of colors to help gardeners learn how their gardens can set the mood they’re looking for.

**Bright colors**
A garden full of bright colors like red, orange, magenta, and yellow can provide a landscape with vigor and energy. The NGA notes that brightly colored flowers can withstand especially bright sunshine, meaning gardeners can marvel at their appearance even when the sun might be adversely affecting other plants and flowers.

The NGA offers the following breakdown of colors to help gardeners learn how their gardens can set the mood they’re looking for.

**Pastel colors**
Pastels, which include soft pink, powder blue, lavender, and peach, create a tranquil feeling in a garden. This makes pastel perfect for those who want their gardens to be a relaxing, peaceful respite from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. The NGA notes that pastels may looked washed out in the midday sun, so they might be best enjoyed early in the morning or late in the afternoon.

**Complementary colors**
Complementary colors are those that are opposite one another on the color wheel. Orange and blue are examples of complementary colors. According to the NGA, complementary colors can add creative energy and vitality to a garden.

**Harmonious colors**
These colors are those that are next to each other on the color wheel, such as orange and red. The NGA recommends harmonious colors for gardeners looking to create a unifying feel in their gardens without resorting to a monochromatic color scheme. Harmonious colors give off a gentle feeling that can make for a relaxing garden atmosphere.

**Monochromatic colors**
Monochromatic gardens can be awe-inspiring even though they stick to a single color and don’t provide an array of awe-inspiring colors. The NGA notes that gardeners with monochromatic gardens make them interesting by using plants of various sizes and shapes. When planting a garden, gardeners can choose whichever color scheme they prefer. To learn more about the effects of color on a garden, visit the National Gardening Association website at www.garden.org.
Identify and treat a garden mole problem

Lawn and garden enthusiasts often must address unforeseen issues when tending to their lawns. Weeds can be a blight, and drought can compromise the look and integrity of a lawn. Another, more deceptive potential adversary is moles. After a spring and summer spent tending to their gardens, no homeowner wants to have their hard work compromised by moles. “The Old Farmer’s Almanac” says that moles are ground-dwelling insectivores that feast on insects in the soil. Moles grow to be roughly six to eight inches long and have gray or black, velvety fur. Their snouts are slender and hairless, and they have very small eyes and ears. Their large front feet have long claws that scoop dirt out of the way like a garden hoe.

Even though moles are more likely to snack on grubs, worms and beetles than plants, they damage gardens and lawns because of their underground tunneling behavior. Moles make subterranean channels throughout the yard in search of food. Some of the telltale signs include sprouted mounds of displaced soil, holes and raised burrows and hills. Tunneling can separate roots from soil, eventually killing vegetation in the process, according to the home and garden experts at BobVila.com.

There are various ways to address mole problems in a lawn or garden. Some professionals may recommend fumigants, home remedies and repellents. But these methods are not always effective, according to Better Homes & Gardens. Using insecticides can rid the lawn of some of the foods that moles dine upon, ultimately discouraging them from coming onto a property. However, many experts agree that trapping is the only reliable means of stopping these creatures.

Homeowners can trap moles humanely by catching the mole in the act. This involves waiting for a mole to start channeling, then using two shovels to block egress on either side of its path. The mole can be removed to a box and relocated. There also are various mole and gopher traps available for sale that operate with spring-loaded snares. Individuals should check if trapping moles is legal where they live. For more information regarding moles, visit www.almanac.com or www.bobvila.com.

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