

COLD FRAME CONSTRUCTION AND USE

A cold frame is a mini greenhouse that will extend the growing season. It is a bottomless box with a clear lid that captures sunlight. It can be used to grow new seeds, propagate new cuttings, grow winter crops, and harden off starter plants such as tomatoes.

The most important component is the sash (window) on top of the cold frame. The window can have glass, clear plexiglas, or clear greenhouse siding. After you choose the top, the next step is to build a box that will fit your window. Materials can be salvaged lumber, new lumber, plywood, plastic barrel, concrete blocks, bricks, etc.

Steps to construct the cold frame.

1. Measure twice, cut once!
2. Measure carefully the dimensions of your sash.
3. Ideally, the frame should be 6" higher in the back than in the front to catch the evening "sun rays" and to help water run off the top of your box. Other research says that it can be flat. (we will demonstrate both)
4. Using the measurements of your box, determine your lumber needs. To build a 18" back, a 12" wide board and a 6" board will give you your dimensions. The sides will be sloped, so cutting your 12" board diagonally will give you the correct dimension. (Please note - Anderle's will make all your cuts for \$ 15.00.- this is money well spent! It is hard to replace a finger!
5. Remember the width of your lumber when building your box. Again, depending on your choice of materials you should consider whether you need to use 1" or 2" lumber.
6. Once the box has been built, reinforce the corners with a batten (usually a 2x2).
7. Place your sash on top of the box to check your work. Attach the window with strap hinges or removable pin hinges (my favorite).
8. Place the cold frame facing the south. Next best choice is west.

Planting the cold frame.

9. Prepare the soil to a depth of 12 to 18 inches. (Dig out some of the dirt that the cold frame is sitting on.)
10. If the soil is prepared properly, there should be little or no need for fertilizer during the winter. The exception may be leaf crops.
11. The cold frame will get hot! Most seeds will germinate at 70-75 degrees. After germination, you do not want the temperature to go below 55 degrees or much higher than 70 degrees. You can regulate the temperature by propping the cold frame open or covering it with a blanket or hay.
12. Much of the watering is done by condensation if the cold frame is correctly constructed. If there is not enough moisture, water or mist the plants. Watch for slugs - they love the conditions of the cold frame!
13. Winter salad garden - lettuce, radish, spinach, Swiss Chard, arugula, green onions, finger carrots, endive, and on and on! ENJOY, ENJOY, ENJOY.

