

Greenhouse: A Story of Possibilities and Unexpected Happenings

by Joy Walker



My greenhouse was purchased as a kit 2011. I don't remember how much I paid for it but today a similar kit costs about \$650. It came in a box of many parts. My dog, Thor, supervised the construction and after some struggles, we managed to put the thing together. The panels were made of plastic (which has held up amazingly well over the years). We started with one big, raised bed inside it but over the years we have tried many different arrangements. The greenhouse is 6 feet by 8 feet. Eventually my son built a wooden frame to raise it off the ground an additional foot. He also build a hydroponics system but that turned out to be very difficult to maintain. We didn't give up the idea of using



pumps and water, but we decided to switch to aquaponics (the difference is using live fish) and populated our little pond with two 2 inch Koi fish who grew to be

over a foot long! Then we had to find a new home for them as they outgrew their 75 gallon home. Just this last summer I simplified the layout again. As much as I love aquaponics it requires a lot of work – and it is expensive to keep the water warm enough all winter, so the fish survive. Currently I only grow tomatoes and peppers in the greenhouse during the summer. During the winter I bury my bonsai trees in the greenhouse soil and unbury them in the spring. In this way they will stay them alive through the cold winters.

Here are a few things I have learned over the years:



- 1) Don't grow zucchini in a greenhouse – you get monster leaves and rotten squash. The greenhouse is too hot and humid.
- 2) Aquaponics is great for growing basil and giant fish. If you love pesto, give it a try.
- 3) Vine tomatoes grow to fill their available space in a greenhouse – even to the point that there is no room for you to enter the greenhouse to retrieve them. One summer they grew out the roof and all over the top of the greenhouse.



4) Plastic and aluminum frame greenhouses are very durable – even when the snow is heavy on the roof.



5) You can keep potted rosemary alive through the winter if you put it in the greenhouse. Bonsai trees can also survive our cold winters.

6) Tomatoes (bush variety) and peppers are the best summer crops – the greenhouse lengthens the growing season for these vegetables. I have tomatoes before my neighbors, and I continue to have them well into the fall.



There are so many ways to use 6 X 8 feet of enclosed garden space – so many wonderful possibilities.