



● *Aluminium is easy to keep clean*

Firstly, decide where your greenhouse is going to go. You need a flat, level surface to stand it on, ideally where it gets maximum sunlight yet still has some protection from the strongest winds.

Once you've located the perfect spot, measure up and choose the biggest greenhouse you can accommodate and afford. Larger sizes are better value (they cost less per square foot) and provide you with loads of valuable growing space.

Now decide what type of greenhouse you'd like. An aluminium framed greenhouse is likely to last a lifetime and require very little maintenance. Simply washing the frame with soapy water will keep it looking good.

For a more traditional garden you could choose a timber framed greenhouse. These will look good in sight of your house but they will require more maintenance over the years and it can require a few more handyman skills when fitting shading or shelving.

For a family friendly greenhouse you now have the option of a plastic frame. These tend to have rounded edges and come glazed with plastic rather than glass making them really safe if you've got young children, grandchildren or pets.

Think about preparing the site for your greenhouse. The type of floor you need depends on your main usage. Paving slabs suit pot-plant cultivation whilst retaining natural drainage. Bare soil is good for summer vegetable cultivation. If you would like to grow vegetables straight from the ground you might want just a path of slabs down the centre of your greenhouse.



● *Wood requires more maintenance*

An electricity supply would give you the most flexibility in terms of using propagators, ventilation fans in the summer or heaters in the winter. Make sure you get a greenhouse with gutters. This lets you easily collect rainwater, which is always the best for watering your plants.

My final piece of advice is to buy your greenhouse and get it installed in your garden before you buy any benches or shelves to fit inside it. You'll get a much better idea of the space and how you'll want to use it, when you stand inside. Then you can decide on the best place to put a potting bench. The area that you're least likely to work in would be good for putting shelving for seed trays.

It's highly likely that, with your

enthusiasm kindled, your use of the greenhouse will alter over time. As you become a more experienced gardener you'll probably be looking for a greenhouse refit.

● *Peter Bennett is a keen gardener and director of greenhouse suppliers Two Wests & Elliott. The Derbyshire based company was founded over 30 years ago by Christopher and Josephine West, together with their 'sleeping' partner Elliott I (their faithful canine companion). 'Elli' is the current company mascot. Readers can contact Peter for further advice on 0870 444 8274 or call in at Unit 4, Carrwood Road, Sheepbridge Industrial Estate, Chesterfield. You can also visit the website at www.twowests.co.uk*