Under Glass: The Greenhouse Shopping List

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With the spring season passed and summer trade show season upon us, many growers will be in the market for new greenhouse structures. Yet, with many people still in the dark about what manufacturers can provide them, here at the National Greenhouse Manufacturers Association we’ve compiled a list of questions that you, as a grower, need to ask when you’re on the showroom floor. Whether you’re buying a small operating system or purchasing acres of greenhouse for your growing business, our manufacturers have the right questions to ask when making your purchases.

Don’t be caught shopping for a greenhouse without these questions:

For the Crop

1. What types of greenhouses do you make, and what are their benefits for my crop? Whether you grow vegetables or perennials, each manufacturer usually has a specific style of greenhouse to fit to your needs. It is always important to specify to the builder what you plan on growing.

2. What kind of a controlled environment can I expect from the greenhouse? One of the most important areas of your greenhouse is how the environment is controlled. Is it automatic venting or is it a computer-controlled system? These simple questions make a big difference in the way your plants will thrive or die.

3. What is the best way to setup the greenhouse so I can work efficiently on my crop? Do you want a professional to install it, or would you rather do it yourself? It all depends on how much of an experienced grower you are. Were you born in a greenhouse? Or do you think that a greenhouse is actually a glass house? Installation all depends on your needs, wants and accessibility.

4. Can I add irrigation equipment, hanging baskets, and other infrastructure to the greenhouse? Additions and equipment features are another facet you want to ask builders about. A greenhouse that’s used for one thing one year might be used for another product the next year, or years down the line. Conformability and change are big things you may want when looking for a greenhouse.

For Construction

1. Do I get a full set of blueprints for the greenhouse?

2. Are there any parts and pieces that I have to procure locally? Can you provide me with everything? Or do I have to search for certain pieces. Being the owner of your own greenhouse does require maintenance, but
how much work do you want to do before it even goes up.

3. If I need a building permit, do you provide stamped structural drawings?

For Energy Efficiency and Sustainability

1. What materials do you use for the main structure and to attach coverings? What are the life expectancies of the materials? Eli Whitney was a genius for creating interchangeable parts, but you don’t want to be consistently replacing parts on structures. Do you research on the materials, especially the coverings. Figure out what the life expectancy/warranties are before even considering going with a certain builder.

2. Can I integrate energy curtains and other energy saving technologies into the greenhouse?

3. Is the greenhouse expandable for my company’s future growth? Am I building this greenhouse for the future or for my own personal growing? No matter how small your greenhouse, always have in the back of your mind the dream to grow your business.

Last but not least, don’t forget to ask these questions. Asking questions will be the big difference between delight and surprise, because the last thing you want is disappointment on the day your greenhouse goes up.

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