

## The Story of my Glorious Glasshouse

Back in the early 2000's, I was offered a "no-longer-wanted" 3 x 4 metre aluminium-framed glasshouse. For free. "If you dismantle it and take it away it's yours."

What excitement!

An opportunity to extend the growing season, mitigate the difficult growing conditions I had been facing and try new and exotic varieties.

The dismantling part turned into a very long day; a good deal longer than I'd been expecting, but no matter! With all the parts now in my possession, the site marked out and prepared, I eagerly awaited the impending reconstruction, sure of its immediacy; dreaming of all I would be able to do.

After all, the Man of the House, so helpful with the dismantling, had said "He would. We even had some instructions!"

Five years' later..... I paid a very handy, visiting friend.

It was worth every penny for, in the intervening years, actually having a functional glasshouse had slipped away into the world of the miraculous.

At last I was back on track, living the dream, and for many months afterwards I could be found, in a state of total bliss, eating my breakfast in that lovely still environment with its early morning ambient warmth, surrounded by thriving plants.

As a committed organic gardener from way back, I determined to try having a fully organic glasshouse system. So far, the experiment has been a success. I've never used any pesticides or had to grow in pots or change the soil.

Most of the problems I've encountered have been of my own making - particularly overplanting (who would have thought they could get THAT big?!) and incorrect watering.

It's been a learning curve, but a joyous one.

I've grown all sorts of veg in there over the years - sweet peppers, aubergines, beans, Lebanese cucumbers, basil, winter lettuce and, of course, tomatoes.

My favourites are the heirloom varieties, especially the ones that are labelled as 'black' anything.

When I found my very first Black Cherry plant at a local Farmers' Market I was over the moon!

It seemed particularly well-suited to the glasshouse environment - growing vigorously, smothered in tasty fruit and generally problem-free.

Having found what I considered a winner, I stuck with it and the following season grew multiple plants which eventually, and en masse, began bearing Fruit for Africa.

I arrived at Mum's, proudly carrying a big bowl of the surplus.

"They look nice" she said "but I don't want too many."

"How many?"

"Give me half a dozen."

WHAT?!!!

You CAN'T be serious! You so can't be serious!

Not only is there this here whopping bowlful but you have no idea how many more are still on the plants, all heading relentlessly to ripeness.

"Can't you give some to friends?" I pleaded.

Reluctantly, she took the bowl. Fast forward a week or two. I turn up for another visit and am greeted with:

"Do you have any more of those tomatoes? We all agree that they're the best we've ever tasted!"

By Bronwyn Cole