

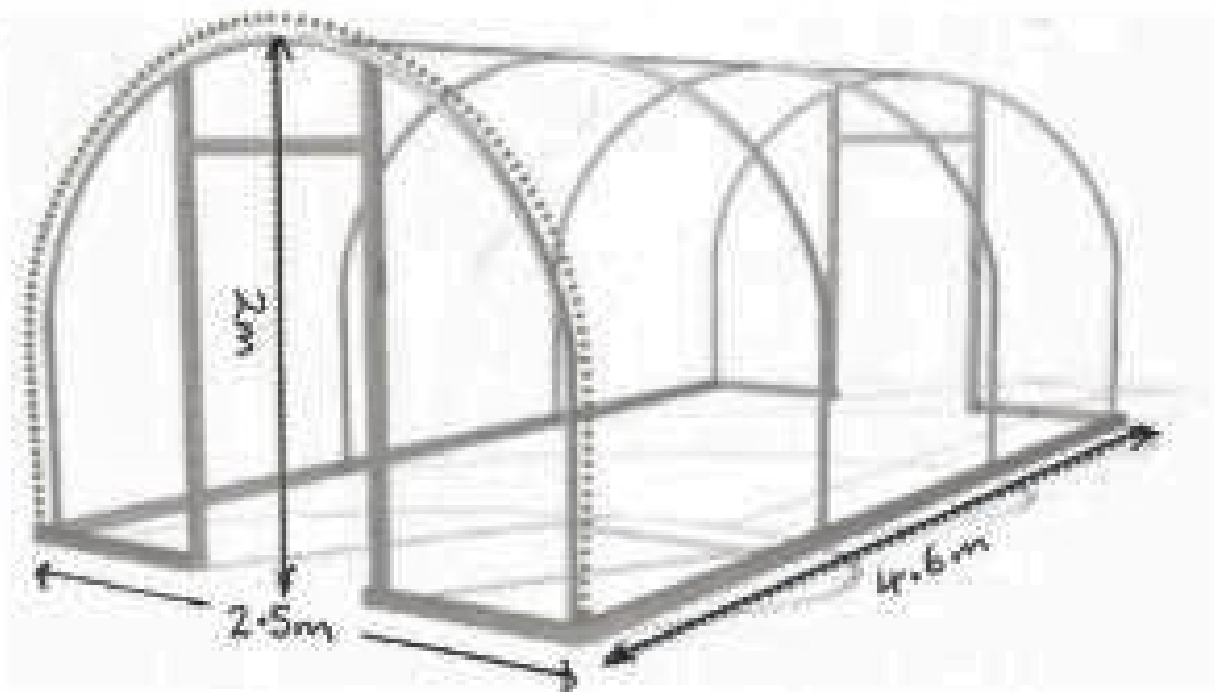


Guide to polytunnels at our sites

Polytunnels have become popular in recent years and they are a good investment for extending the growing season, shielding plants from birds, and protecting tomatoes against blight. However, there are some common-sense ideas that will make life easier for the allotment holder and their neighbours.



Polytunnels on the Chesham allotments should be no longer than 15 feet, no wider than 8 feet and no higher than 6 ½ feet. That is 4.6 metres long, 2.5 metres wide and 2 metres high.



2

Polytunnels can be bought ready made or created from materials you buy or 'acquire'. If you are DIYing your polytunnel, DO invest in proper horticultural polythene which lasts at least five years.



This photo from Cameron Road shows what happens after only a few months if you just use heavyweight builders' polythene; it isn't UV-stable and it just disintegrates. All that hard work and money for nothing!

3

Whatever you build, it should be 18 inches away from the boundary of your plot, not prevent the use of common pathways and be at least three feet from the boundary of the allotment site as whole.



A neat polytunnel on the Asheridge Road site... note how there is room to walk between it and the hedge behind.

4

4. Avoid orienting your polytunnel with a broad side directly into the direction of the prevailing wind. For our sites this is generally from the west but be aware of any geographic features like trees, buildings, or hills that may alter this.

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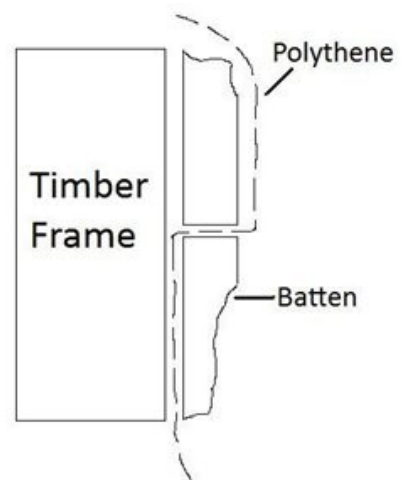
The polytunnel MUST be properly secured to the ground to prevent it from becoming a dangerous and destructive large flying object. Some suggestions for this are:

a) If you are using metal poles you could invest in some pipe clamps and a metal plate and bury the plate in the ground as per the photo below. Or ...



b) If you are using plastic pipe structural supports, you can sledgehammer treated wooden stakes, or galvanized steel stakes, deep into the ground for each support, slip the pipe over these and secure with strong screws. Or ...

c) You could secure the polytunnel sides to an existing bed frame/sides with battens and strong screws. Or ...



d) You can bury "trench" the sides of the tunnel and the structural supports at least 18" inches into the soil.

IMPORTANT:

Just using "tent pegs" to hold down the structure will not be sufficient in any sort of strong wind and your polytunnel will end up in Hemel Hempstead after destroying your neighbour's crops! Remember that the polytunnel owner is responsible for damage caused by an insecure structure.

6

The plastic cover on your polytunnel should be kept as taut as possible. It will loosen up over time, so look to make sure it has not become loose. If it is a little loose, make it taut again by raising the hoops, or tightening it at the base rail. If your polytunnel is trenched, make sure the plastic is still firmly held beneath the soil all around the structure.