



The Gelderloos family grows vegetables all year round in their Paradise Valley home, "bringing nature's vitamins into our lives," Pouwel says. He believes that for conserving energy building an attached greenhouse to one's home is a most practical step. His wife Miriam looks like she heartily agrees. See oasisybridhomes.com for extensive details about this home's many features.

Three Montana Sunrooms

Brighten your winter, and grow plants year round in a home addition

Valerie Harms

Imagine enjoying a sun-filled dining nook, a light-drenched atrium for growing exotic plants, a glass ceiling open onto nighttime's stars. Whether called "sunrooms," "atriums," "solariums" or "greenhouses," these additions to your home provide many benefits. Many of us are familiar with the two-season detached greenhouse, in which one can start seedlings, transplant pots, and protect plants (e.g. tomatoes) from sudden cold weather (e.g. hail). If designed right and attached to your home, sunrooms can

enable you to grow plants at least three seasons and save on energy costs all year round. These are becoming more and more popular, especially as we try to move the outdoors inside.

In zone 4's climate, vertical glass walls should face south, but skylights and roof windows should generally face north, east, or west to avoid turning the room into an oven. To light spaces evenly, use several skylights spread out over the roof. Keep in mind that the sun's path in summer is higher in the sky than winter. Take advantage of this fact by providing overhangs so that the window is shaded during summer days but not in winter. A contractor can help you with measurements.

The more windows you can open, the more control you'll have over the room's temperature. Double-pane windows, insulation, and tight weather sealing can add days of extra usability.

Since glass rooms tend to cool quicker in the evening and heat faster in the morning, to even out temperature swings make the flooring concrete or crushed stones that absorb heat during the day and radiate it back into the room at night. Spilling water or soil on such flooring won't matter either. If that kind of floor does not appeal, there are hundreds of porcelain, marble, ceramic, laminate, and vinyl patterns to choose from. Make sure you've considered how it will bear up under changes of temperature and sunlight.

Here are people's favorite plants to grow in the winter in their attached sunrooms. In southern exposures you will find Christmas cactus, African violets, and orchids. Herbs, purple passion plant, prayer plant, cyclamen, and paperwhites for the holidays are also popular. Swedish ivy is possible, but beware white flies. Geraniums saved from summer grow bonsai-like as their stems thicken and the leaves get smaller. They are a joy to have around in January and February. With a sunroom you have a terrific opportunity to expand your repertoire and experiment.

In the photographs you will see a variety of sunroom treatments.

FISHERS

The Fisher's new addition, inside and out. Because of the large windows typically found in sunrooms, they can get chilly on a cold winter's day. A small space heater often is sufficient to keep the space habitable for people and plants. They also can get hot in the summer; opening windows and a screen door create good cross ventilation.



Photo: Valerie Harms

Jake & Chris Fisher of Belgrade hired Butch Keyes, owner of Crazy Mountain Homes in Livingston, to attach a custom Lindal sunroom on their home. Here they eat, read, and grow plants all year round. With windows on three sides and 1/3 of the roof, the room is light and airy. They easily watch birds, a favorite occupation. They've even slept in the charming room. Chris says, "It takes away all winter depression."



Photo: Butch Keyes

GELDERLOOS

For Pouwel Gelderloos, builder, this wraparound atrium is the focal point of his hybrid home.

Aside from capturing solar heat, it enhances the elegance of the home.

Doors to the main quarters can be opened or closed depending on the temperature.

Concrete flooring, rock, sand, soil, brick, and water also store and slowly release heat.

