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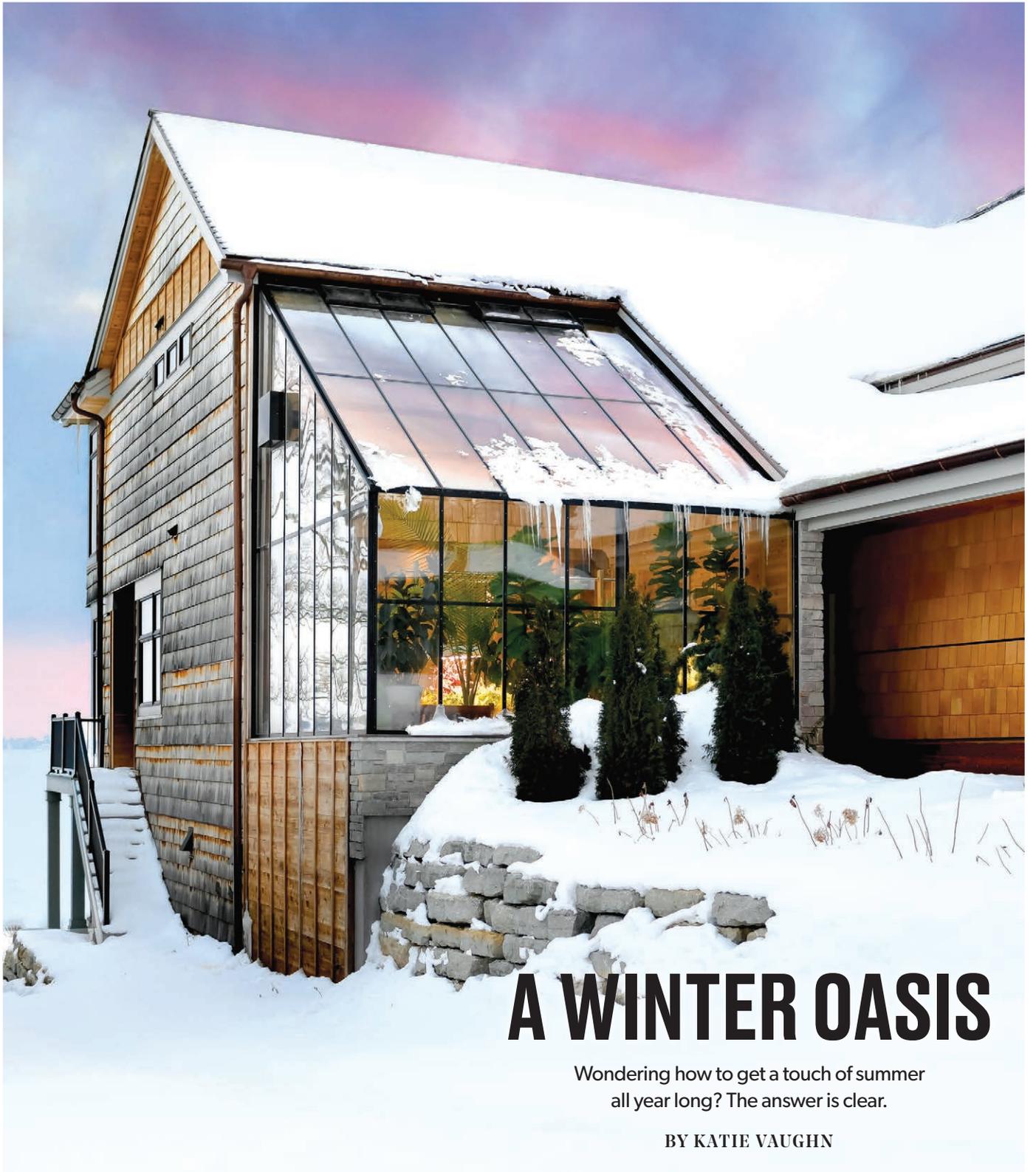


PHOTO BY NIKKI HANSEN

A WINTER OASIS

Wondering how to get a touch of summer all year long? The answer is clear.

BY KATIE VAUGHN

IT ALMOST ALWAYS STARTS with a dream.

A vision of flowers blooming in the dead of winter. Or harvesting veggies for your family to eat year-round. Or tucking away with a book as snow falls gently on the glass walls and ceiling surrounding you.

“A greenhouse is a fairy tale purchase,” says Jordan Hosking, owner of Wisconsin Greenhouse Co. and founder of the Madison Greenhouse Store on Williamson Street.

Anyone who decides to buy one usually has “some sort of dream concept in their mind,” he says. “They go to the botanical gardens, or see one in a magazine, or go to England and say, ‘I want to have that.’”

Hosking’s job – and passion – is bringing those visions to life and serving as the reality check of what the project entails.

Cost is a big factor. The average greenhouse runs \$100 to \$200 per square foot, but it can sometimes go up to \$400 per square foot. That means a modest 10-by-20-foot structure starts at \$20,000.



A greenhouse’s purpose varies: The Reinders family’s Mount Horeb greenhouse (*opposite page*) encloses a koi fish pond. Jordan Hosking’s Maple Bluff greenhouse (*above*) supports a small backyard garden hobby. Tom Parks’ Milwaukee-area greenhouse (*below*) is a space for entertaining.

“It’s a jaw-dropper for pretty much everyone looking,” Hosking says.

But when a dream calls, many find a way to make it happen. Hosking has installed greenhouses across the country, everywhere from rolling hills to city rooftops – and for clients ranging from celebrities to regular folks who want to build their own glass-walled oases.

“Every one is unique, and it’s personal each time,” Hosking says.

On his 35 wooded acres outside of Mount Horeb, Joel Reinders and his family chose a cottage-style greenhouse with a peaked roof. But his main goal was creating a home for the koi he’s raised for years.

The greenhouse contains a 3,000-gallon fish pond, the centerpiece to a space where the family also grows some vegetables, plants and a lemon tree.

“It’s a magical space,” Reinders says. “If you need to wind down, you can feed the koi.”

For Tom Parks, who lives toward Milwaukee, being cooped up at home during the pandemic fast-tracked his greenhouse purchase. Desiring a space that would feel as exciting as their





Dream Big, but Plan Down to the Smallest Details



While greenhouses take only a few days to construct, take time to plan before the glass goes up.

Peruse Pinterest boards, greenhouse catalogs and Instagram feeds to get a sense of what style you like.

Then take into consideration size, budget and placement of the greenhouse. Stake out where you think it might go, and then step back, says greenhouse owner Joel Reinders. Repeat the process until you find just the right spot.

And pay close attention to where the light will come in, says Heidi Elliott. South-facing greenhouses will stay warmest in winter but get hot in summer, while north-facing structures likely need extra lights and heat in winter.

Consult with the pros along the way, and work with them to get all the info needed for any city permits that may be required.

Once your greenhouse is up, expect some trial and error in figuring out heating, lighting and pest control.

And be prepared for visitors. “You can see ours from the road,” says Tom Fox. “We got the whole neighborhood talking!”



Tom Parks worked with Wisconsin Greenhouse Co. to build this French-style structure to match his home.

“What’s surprised me most is how much we use it, the entertainment factor,” Parks says. “We use it almost every night. It’s just so beautiful.”

Heidi Elliott grows vegetables and flowers in her greenhouse from fall to spring. “I can walk from our greenhouse into our kitchen,” she says of the structure, which is attached to the house she and her family built on Madison’s north side.

She envisioned a space where she could grow vegetables, start plants for spring and experiment with flowers – ranunculus, anemones and snapdragons are her favorites, and she has begun practicing with dahlias. “I always want to have a project going,” she says.

Elliott’s greenhouse faces north, so there’s been a learning curve in figuring out the lighting and heating needs, especially in winter.

That’s common, particularly in places as cold as Wisconsin, Hosking says.

“Most plants like it about 60 to 70 degrees and also like a certain amount of light to get fruit,” he explains. “And it can be super cloudy in Wisconsin in winter and daylight is short. You still have to outthink the elements a bit.”

Many greenhouse owners actually like the puzzle of determining what works and how to adjust, considering the tinkering just part of the adventure. And any challenge is outweighed by the delights a greenhouse brings, Elliott says.

“There’s nothing like having fresh-cut flowers in the middle of winter,” she says.

travels, he and his wife opted for a French-style structure to match their home. With a brick floor, dining table, chandelier and day bed, their greenhouse has been a perfect place for happy hour with friends – and they even hosted a wedding last summer.

“What’s surprised me most is how much we use it, the entertainment factor,” Parks says. “We use it almost every night. It’s just so beautiful.”

PHOTO COURTESY OF WISCONSIN GREENHOUSE CO.

Katie Vaughn is a Madison-based arts, family, home and travel writer. @katiemv