

Before we delve into today's column I have a few tiny corrections to make. The book on composting with worms is called "Worms Eat My Garbage," not "garden." The "Paint 'n bake" for ceramic tile painting is now \$2.99 per container and can also be found at Joann Fabrics and Crafts in Port Orchard. Don't fret too much about the price, four different colors is enough to paint about 300 or more tiles. Lastly, the baking temperature for said tiles is 325 degrees (not 25 degrees higher).

Now, on with this week's gardening topic. Several years ago when our son and his wife moved to Boulder, we inherited a window he was saving for a cold frame. This year we're going to actually make one. Of course I visited several web sites to research the project. You can hop on over to these three sites to do your own research or email/write to me and I'll send you copies of what I found. Visit [humeseeds.com/cldfrm](http://humeseeds.com/cldfrm) or [gardengatemagazine.com/tips/25tip9](http://gardengatemagazine.com/tips/25tip9) or [suite101.com/article.cfm](http://suite101.com/article.cfm) to learn more and see illustrations.

I've always wondered why cold frames were slanted on top. It's so snow and water will drain off the top. The slant also captures and regulates the heat inside the frame and lets you open the lid slightly without letting in too much cold air. You can build the box portion using bales of straw, wood, or bricks. For the clear roof (door) of the frame you can use thick plastic, plexiglas, fiberglass panels, old shower doors or an old window.

Cold frames can vary in size according to their intended use. Some people use their cold frames to grow winter vegetables or over-winter rooted cuttings and other semi-tender plants. Others use cold frames to start seeds in the spring. For extra warmth you could place heating coils or cables (purchased from greenhouse supply or garden centers) under the soil. Think of a cold frame as a mini-greenhouse (with or without heat).

To build a cold frame in your garden, find an area that faces south for maximum sunlight exposure. Or find the sunniest part of your garden. Be sure the water doesn't puddle in this area. Sloping the soil can remedy any drainage problems. Decide how large to make your cold frame. Try four feet by eight feet. (We're starting smaller with three feet by five feet.)

You'll want to insulate your plants in several ways. Prepare the soil where the frame will sit. Dig and loosen the soil to eight to twelve inches deep and enrich it with compost. Each year after, add compost and some new soil. You can also grow plants in pots in your cold frame.

Use wood, bricks or straw bales to build the sides of the frame. Remember to slant the frame. A good slant is 18 inches tall in back sloping down to 12 inches in front. You can bury the sides of the frame in the soil to give added insulation. Some gardeners add manure around the inside edges to produce heat.

The Northwest College of Art Master Gardener Demonstration Garden on Highway 305 (north of the Agate Pass Bridge) has a working greenhouse and cold frame. You can visit there in daylight hours to see how the gardeners are using it and get ideas for your own cold frame.

This is the time to plant rows of leaf lettuce, spinach, radishes, green onions and other salad greens in your cold frame so you can feast away on fresh homegrown salads all winter until it's time to start spring seedlings. You might even try growing beets and carrots. Water your plants at least once a week. You might place a small thermometer in your cold frame to track temperatures inside. Opening the lid regulates the temperature. Open the lid to let our northwest rains water your plants inside. Remember to close the lid each night to keep the plants warm. When the weather turns really cold you'll need to cover your cold frame with burlap or a blanket to keep the plants warm. Don't forget to uncover the frame each day though or plants will die from lack of light.

I'll report back and share what we planted in our cold frame and how successful we were. Our climate is ideal for cold frames. They're a great way to extend the gardening season.

Tip of the week: Be sure to write down where you planted your vegetables in your garden this year so you can rotate your crops. Rotating crops keeps the bugs confused and helps grow healthier plants.

This week's web picks: [Kitchengarden.com](http://Kitchengarden.com) has vegetable and herb information and features recipes. Visit [bulb.com](http://bulb.com) to decide what bulbs you'll buy locally to plant in October through December. Both sites have fabulous photographs to tempt us.