

The Sandy Post

Home & Garden

Check ovens
before buying

Consumers should consider many factors when buying a portable convection oven.

Prices begin at about \$190 and range to nearly \$300, but comparisons can also be made on capacity, safety and ease of cleaning.

These portable ovens often have smaller interior capacity than a conventional oven. Most models have about one cubic foot of space in the oven cavity. At least one inch of space must be left around foods to allow for even air circulation.

Safety is another consideration. Check the oven to see if it is well-insulated. If it gets too hot to touch during use, not only is energy being lost through the oven walls, but the oven may become a safety hazard.

Check to see if the controls are easy to read and use. Controls at the back of the oven may be more difficult to adjust safely if the oven becomes hot to touch when in use.

There should be clear instructions with the oven for adapting standard baking times and parts should be easy to remove for cleaning.

A final consideration is the space requirement one additional appliance will take when put in place on your countertop. Will its placement take up too much of the available workspace you have in your kitchen?

Free gift a costly bargain

Last year about this time, when my girls and I stopped in at a feed store to pick up the month's supply of grain, we were smothered by the sounds of peeping chickens.

I clearly remember that there were crates of fuzzy, yellow puffs all over the store and more in the back room. The girls were enchanted by the chicks, the manager of the store was pulling his hair out because of them and I was floored because they were free.



Margaret Schmale's

Bits
and pieces

There was a slight catch. I didn't have any of the equipment necessary to feed and water chickens, so there was a minimal investment and the feed only came in 80-pound bags. It became quite clear how the feed company could afford to "give" the chicks away.

It wasn't until halfway home that I began to wonder just where I was going to put those little babies. They were too young to stick outside and the cats would snack on them in the woodshed. That left the house. I was going to have 36 peeping, pooping chickens in my house. Talk about not thinking ahead, I could see that I had made a Class A booboo.

I cut down a big cardboard box, lined it with papers and put it in the bathroom so the chicks would have plenty of heat. That was my second mistake.

It didn't take the babies long before they hopped over the box and we were all hopping over the babies. I got a bigger box and moved them to the kitchen.

I had no idea that such little birds could have such big appetites. Every time I started to cook or just get a cup of coffee, the babies came to life. Soon they were eating cereal, bread crumbs and crackers. It was like having 36 garbage disposals. It was amazing how they grew.

One morning, as we sat down to breakfast, my husband looked at me and said, "The chickens have got to go. They're roosting on the fruit jars, the washer and the back of the chair I use when I pull off my boots."

"I didn't think they were sleeping in their box anymore," I replied. "And, you know, I think one of them is starting to crow."

My husband looked at the rooster on the dryer and said, "This place is starting to look like a Ma and Pa Kettle movie. Get those birds out today!"

I had one heck of a time convincing those chickens that his decision was final. I put them in a pen and gave them everything they needed, but it's hard to leave the nest. The girls had given each of them a name and since their numbers had decreased by 10, the Army alphabet was used. By the time they said Able, Baker, Charlie, the birds were over the fence and on my back porch.

The chickens finally got back in the house, but unfortunately for them, they're in the frying pan.

Edible landscaping answer
for homes with small yards

Homeowners who would like to try vegetable gardening but have little space available in their yards for a traditional garden need not despair.

Edible landscaping may be the answer.

Many fruit, berry and vegetable plants can be dual-purpose ornamentals. The plants can provide low-cost, fresh food and function as landscape ornamentals at the same time.

Here are some examples of cool spring and summer season vegetables which can also serve as landscape plants.

Kale, a cool season vegetable plant, is striking in front of evergreens, rhododendrons or other large shrubs. Bunching onions can provide a nice background for early spring flowers. Other cool season vegetables that can double as landscape plants include parsley, thyme, rosemary and leeks. Leeks flower in spring, then re-seed themselves.

In mid-spring, many lettuce varieties, mint, rhubarb, lemon balm and carrots can be mixed in colorful combinations with flowers. Peas can be trellised as background.

These plants also go well with several types of spring

flowering trees and shrubs. A blossoming apple tree with a bed of mixed lettuce and daffodils underneath is a good example.

The list of summer season vegetables that can serve as landscaping plants includes red and green peppers and summer squash varieties with their mottled leaves. Asparagus, corn and sunflowers work well as backgrounds.

Many vegetables and herbs make especially useful fall ornamentals since their colors and textures remain longer than most purely ornamental annuals.

Many types of cabbage, leaf lettuces, carrots, red-stemmed Swiss chard and flowering kale all turn a brighter color in colder weather. Leaf lettuce also makes good borders in the home landscape.

Several types of perennial plants can serve as both landscape and food-producing plants. Fruit trees provide summer shade, while many types of berry plants can make effective hedges and yard dividers.

Red and black raspberries, blackberries, loganberries and blueberries can all be easily situated among other ornamentals. Strawberries, though low growing, make attractive

ground covers or edging borders.

Blueberry bushes are one of the best food-ornamental combination plants. They are especially useful with other acid-soil loving ornamentals, such as azaleas and rhododendrons.

Since blueberry bushes bloom early, they make a good background for early spring flowers. Their dark, green summer foliage, bright fall leaves and striking red stems make them stand out all year. And, of course, blueberry bushes produce a tasty fruit which ripens in July, adding purples and blues to any landscape.

Any berry, fruit or nut plant should be chosen carefully. Gardeners should make sure that the particular variety will fit their space requirements, is suited to the soil and climatic conditions and is one which can be enjoyed by their families. Many newer dwarf varieties allow even small yards to have a few fruit trees.

Grape bearing vines are another edible landscape possibility. When attached to a trellis or overhead structure, they provide shade, privacy and, in season, tasty grapes.

Fruit tree pollination vital

Without sufficient pollination, most fruit trees will blossom abundantly, but will not bear fruit.

Some species of fruit trees have perfect flowers. Both the anthers, which contain pollen, and the pistils, which develop the fruit are in the same blossom. Trees that bear fruit through self-pollination, or set fruit without pollination, are called "self-fruitful."

However, there are many types of fruit with perfect flowers that cannot produce fruit from their own pollen. These require pollen from another variety and are called "self-unfruitful."

All sweet cherries and

most varieties of apples and pears grown in western Oregon will not set fruit unless they are pollinated by another pollen-compatible variety.

Usually, though not always, there are enough wild bees around home gardens to transfer the pollen if the two varieties are planted close enough together.

The pollen of the three most commonly grown sweet cherry varieties — Bing, Lambert and Royal — will not cause fruit to set on each other. A fourth variety, such as Corum, Sam or Van, is needed to pollinate any of the first three.

Most apple varieties which don't set fruit when self-pollinated do have pollen which will set fruit on other varieties.

In contrast, Gravenstein, which requires an early-blooming pollinizer such as Lodi, does not produce good pollen for other apple varieties. McIntosh is self-fruitful, but will pollinize other early-blooming varieties such as Gravenstein. Some varieties, Rome Beauty, Newton and Transparent, are self-fruitful.

Bartlett pears may set a few seedless pears without cross-pollination, but they will set more if pollinized by

d'Anjou. Bosc and Comice pear trees will pollinize each other with satisfactory results.

When starting an orchard, it is important to plant pollen-compatible trees. They should be within 100 feet of each other to ensure adequate pollination. If a pollen-compatible tree is needed in an existing orchard, the pollinizer can be grafted to the main variety.

One very important point to remember is that the bloom periods of the main and pollinizer variety must overlap enough to provide at least several days over which cross-pollination can take place.

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