Thursday, 16 June 2016

Preparing Garden Building Foundations

Getting the foundations for a garden building correct is very important. The foundations must be level and firm, drainage is also an important factor to consider. Also position of the building should be well planed so as not to be obtrusive, whilst allowing easy access with large items. A corner of the garden is the most obvious place for a shed but remember to allow enough room to get around all the sides to treat the timber. The best type of base for any garden building is a concrete base laid on hardcore, but this can be expensive and difficult and a professional builder may be required to do the work for you if you are in any doubt.

The two easiest and still very effective types of bases are a slab base or a treated timber frame base. Please click on the links on the right for guides on creating these types of bases.

Slab Base Guide

Tools needed

- Rubber Mallet
- Spirit Level (the longer the better)
- Spade
- Shovel
- Rake
- Wheel Barrow
- Hand Saw
- Hammer
- Tape Measure

Materials

- Concrete Slabs
- Sand
- Cement
- Timber for Shuttering (100mm x 22mm)
- Wooden stakes
- Nails

Guide

- Start by making a timber frame with the shuttering, Use the nails and butt joints to fix the ends together, the frame needs to be approximately 100mm larger than the area of the garden building floor.

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- Lay the frame in the position where you will put the base, make sure it is square by measuring corner to corner diagonally; the measurements should be the same.
- Hammer one stake on the outside of each corner leaving a minimum of 75mm out of the ground, use the spirit level to check that the stakes are fairly level, then remove the timber frame.
- Use the spade to remove the grass and excess soil from inside the area to give a level surface.
- (Optional) if required you can remove an extra 75mm + to allow for hardcore under the screed although it is not essential.
- Replace the timber frame and nail it to the top of the stakes. Hammer the stakes down until the frame is level and is a minimum of approximately 100mm from the new soil level.
- Mix up the sand and cement into a 6 sand to one cement dry mix, fill the base to the top of the shuttering with the mix using the rake to level it out.
- Wet the mix lightly in one corner and lay your first slab tight to the edge of the shuttering, it is very important that the first slab is level so check it a couple of times to be sure, you can use the rubber mallet to make slight adjustments.
- Follow the last procedure for the rest of the slabs, the slabs do not have to be close up to each other, gaps of up to 400mm are acceptable and will also allow air to travel under the building floor.
- When all the slabs are laid use a hose pipe on light spray to wet the screed then leave the shuttering in place for at least two days for the dry mix to set.
- Sit back with a cup of tea and admire your finished master piece.

Timber Base Guide

Tools needed

- Spirit Level (the longer the better)
- Spade
- Hand Saw
- Hammer
- Tape measure

Materials

- Treated timber rafters (150mm x 50mm)
- Wooden stakes
- Nails
- Polythene sheeting or weed netting

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Guide

- Firstly cut and nail together your timber rafters to form a full frame the same size as the floor of your timber building, the rafters should be placed at 400mm centers and run at right angles to the floor timbers. If you are unsure please check with us for details.
- Lay the frame in the place your building will be and use the stakes to mark the corners, then remove the frame.
- Remove the grass and undergrowth from the area. Use the rake to level the area out.
- Lay the netting or sheeting down to stop the weeds coming through. Lay the timber base on top of the netting.
- Check that the base now sits level, if it does not use flat packers that will not rot (small pieces of slate are ideal) to pack up the frame to a level position. If this creates gaps under the frame make sure these are adequately packed up so as that the timber does not bow under the weight of the garden building.
- The final step is to nail the stakes to the corners of the frame so that it does not move about when erecting your garden building.
- Sit back with a cup of tea and admire your finished master piece.

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