

Buyer's guide / Garden thermometers

Take your temperature!

Geoff Hodge finds it extraordinary that so few gardeners own a thermometer



IT HAS always amazed me that, when so many aspects of growing plants - especially propagation - rely on temperature, so few gardeners own a good thermometer!

The obvious times when a thermometer is a must is when you are overwintering plants frost free in the greenhouse and when you're sowing seeds - whether that's under cover, indoors or outside in the ground.

Although it's all well and

good knowing the current temperature, for gardening it's far more useful to also know the maximum and minimum temperature.

Successful seed germination and even rooting of cuttings is very much dependent on providing reasonably constant temperatures - if they fluctuate wildly from high in the day to low overnight, you'll never get good results. And this may explain why you've had germination problems in the past.

A good thermometer is also very useful for setting the temperatures of propagators

with a thermostat.

The obvious circumstance for a standard thermometer is when checking on soil or compost temperature.

When I did the lawn patching kits test for GN, I sowed the grass seed on April 3. After seven days not a single seed had germinated! After checking with my soil thermometer, the temperature was 2C (35F) - far too low for grass seed to germinate!

Investing in a good thermostat is a sure-fire way to help improve your growing skills. Choose from the following options.



Suppliers

Bosmere
01293 586200
www.bosmere.com
Supplies direct to garden centres and stores

Botanico/Nortene
01905 791984
www.botanicogarden.co.uk
Supplies direct to garden centres and stores

Gardman
01406 372237
www.gardman.co.uk
Supplies direct to garden centres and stores

Harrod Horticultural
0845 402 5300
www.harrodhorticultural.com
Two Wests & Elliott
01246 451077
www.twowests.co.uk

Soil/propagation thermometers

These traditional liquid thermometers are useful for finding out the current temperature of composts and soils to ensure they're warm enough to give good germination and subsequent growth.

The best soil thermometers have a metal surround to protect the glass scale from damage when inserting them into rough ground. But soil thermometers can also be used for taking the temperature of composts etc.

1) Bosmere Propagator Thermometer and 2) Gardman Propagation Thermometer

The large plastic surround makes these thermometers less fiddly to handle and the scale is easy to read.

- **Temperature range** 0C to 50C/30F to 120F
- **Price guide** Bosmere £3.50; Gardman £3.49

3) Gardeners' Test Propagation Thermometer

Handy for propagation, the protective 'pen' case clips to clothing and protects the thermometer from accidental damage.

- **Temperature range** -30C to 50C/-22F to 122F
- **Price guide** £3.95; available from Harrod Horticultural

4) Tenax Propagating Thermometer

Another small thermometer for reading the current temperature.

- **Temperature range** -30C to 50C/-22F to 122F
- **Price guide** £4.25; available from Two Wests & Elliott

5) Gardman Soil Thermometer

Easy to use, handle and insert into the soil. Good metal sheath protection.

- **Temperature range** -10C to 120C/0F to 230F
- **Price guide** £9.99

6) Bosmere Soil Thermometer

Easy to use, handle and insert into the soil. Good metal sheath protection.

- **Temperature range** -15C to 110C/6F to 230F
- **Price guide** £11.99

7) Nortene Propagating Thermometer

A small, but useful thermometer that you can tuck away in your propagation kit.

- **Temperature range** -30C to 50C/-22F to 122F
- **Price guide** £3.99

Digital thermometers

My preference has always been for digital maximum/minimum thermometers - I find they're more versatile, easy to use and easier to read than liquid thermometers.

You view the current temperature on the screen and the maximum and minimum temperatures are recorded and stored. They can be viewed and then reset at the touch of a button.

Brannan Wireless Digital Max Min Thermometer and Hygrometer

This is a useful maximum/minimum thermometer that also measures the indoor humidity - handy for growing houseplants well, for instance. The main unit records the temperature and humidity indoors and the remote unit measures the temperature wherever it's placed - such as in the garden or greenhouse - and sends the information wirelessly to the main unit. The transmission range is up to 30m (100ft).

- **Temperature range** Outdoors: -50C to 70C/-58F to 158F; indoors: 0 to 50C/32 to 122F
- **Price guide** £31.95; available from Two Wests & Elliott



Free hydrangea

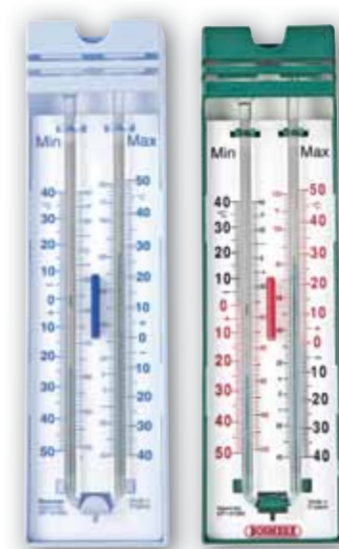
Just pay postage for one plant of 'Annabelle' Page 49

Maximum & minimum thermometers

Bosmere Mercury Free Thermometer and Brannan Thermometer

Traditional maximum/minimum thermometers use a liquid to show the current temperature and the maximum and minimum temperatures are recorded by marker indices in the tube. You reset the indices by pushing the button.

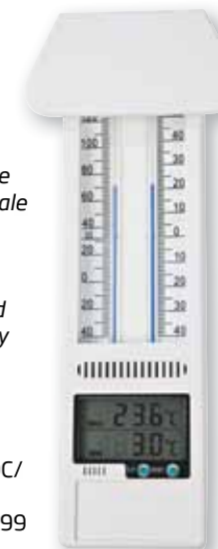
- **Temperature range** -40C to 50C/-40F to 120F
- **Price guide** Bosmere £12.99; Brannan £14.95 from Two Wests & Elliott



Botanico Mercury Free Digital Max/Min Thermometer

This thermometer features an interesting combination of old and new. It measures the current temperature on the dual liquid scale and the maximum and minimum temperatures are recorded and stored on the digital display until it is reset. Needs AAA battery (not included).

- **Temperature range** -40C to 50C/-40F to 122F
- **Price guide** £19.99



Gardman Dual Display Digital Thermometer

A useful thermometer that uses an external temperature probe on a 1.4m (4½ft) cable, so you can measure temperatures in two places, such as indoors and outdoors. It also uses such thermometers to measure the difference in temperatures inside and outside thermostatically-heated propagators when setting them up before use. Needs AAA battery (included).

- **Temperature range** Not specified
- **Price guide** £9.99



Maplin Dual Display Indoor/Outdoor Thermometer with Alarm

This is my favourite thermometer. Like the Gardman it is very versatile, having an external temperature probe on a 3m (10ft) long cable, but it also features an alarm. The alarm will alert you when temperatures go outside the high and low temperature ranges you've set. Needs AAA battery (included).

- **Temperature range** outdoors: -50C to 70C/-58 to 158F; indoors: -20C to 70C/-4F to 158F
- **Price guide** £13.45; available from Harrod Horticultural

WIN OUR BEST BUY

WE have 10 of the Best Buy digital thermometers to give away! Send your name and address to Garden News Thermometer Giveaway, PO Box 57, Coates, Peterborough PE7 2FE or enter online at www.greatcompetitions.co.uk. Closing date is February 14. Please write 'do not contact' if you don't want to be contacted by us or by carefully selected partner organisations.



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