



Aboveground burrow – cool climate

Pet desert tortoises can live outside their natural range using the burrow described here (e.g. in northern Nevada where the ground freezes). You must be able to reach into the burrow to remove the tortoise after it has gone into brumation.

The tortoise will spend the winter months in a cool area indoors.

Note: This burrow is not suitable for the Mojave Desert.

Materials

- ¾ ton sifted soil (to remove rocks), chat, or reject sand
- 6 concrete blocks 8" x 8" x 16"
- 6 concrete blocks 4" x 8" x 16" (optional)
- 4' x 8' x ¾" exterior plywood
- 1 piece of 4 mil plastic 36" x 46"

Before you begin:

- Be sure to orient the burrow opening away from the most direct, hot sun
- Check that drainage from roof, yard, and sidewalks will not flow near burrow



- 1 Create a pad of level ground 2-3" high that is about 42" x 34" (slightly larger than the wood).
 - Lay the plastic on the dirt so that it overlaps by a few inches all around.
 - Place the 40" x 32" plywood on the plastic, making sure the corners are well supported.

- 2 Lay the blocks on the plywood to create a rectangle 32" x 40"



- 3 For tortoises that walk tall, extend the height using a 4" high block, or a sheet of 1-2" Styrofoam with the channel cut out.

- 4 Fill blocks with dirt.
 - Spread 1-2" sifted dirt in the channel floor
 - Cover the blocks with the 40" x 32" piece of plywood
 - DO NOT cover the plywood with plastic, as the burrow must breathe.



- 5 Mound dirt to a height of 6-8" on top. Create a gentle slope all around so the tortoise will not tumble when it crawls to the top of the burrow.



- 6 Protect the entrance from water by creating a berm.

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