Habitat checklist - cool climate

You may wish to look at ‘Creating a Tortoise Habitat’ on our website, www.tortoisegroup.org, a presentation that shows the habitat features of eight yards in Las Vegas. You will also see lots of tips on tortoise care.

Yard
- The recommended area for the tortoise is 600 square feet (for example, 30’ x 20’).
- Some areas of shade and some of full sun.
- Area must be fenced. Most people have block walls. Chain link and wrought iron must be faced with something 18” high that the tortoise cannot see through.
- 12”-long stakes in the ground every 4” along perimeter to prevent digging out.
- One-foot clear space around edge of the habitat for tortoise to walk.

Burrow (the most important feature of the habitat)
- Drainage from roof and yard must not enter burrow.
- Burrow is at least 5’ from walls, sidewalks, and plants on all sides.
- Burrow is located in a completely dry area at least 10’ x 10’. This can be an aboveground or underground burrow.
- Burrow opening does not face east or west (to avoid the hot summer sun).
- Build using ‘Cool Climate Burrow’ instructions.

Brumation Location
- A safe, indoor location maintained at 35-50°F.

Water
- Build a Water Dish (p. 16 of the adoption & care booklet).
- On our website, check ‘Creating a Tortoise Habitat’

Plants
- Put in a variety of plants from our list so that the tortoise can browse.
- Establish a 3’ x 3’ patch of grass that will be kept short.

Hazards
- Tortoises can easily climb stacked Windsor blocks.
- Check yard equipment, firewood, toys, etc.
- A tortoise can crawl under or climb up on items and tip over or get stuck. This can easily lead to death.
- Modify steps and other drop-offs.
- Fence an open pool or pond.
- Frisky, untrainable dogs can harm or kill a tortoise.
- Block or cover open fences (like chain link).
- A tortoise can stick an arm in and hurt the arm or nail.
- Do not use pelletized fertilizer.
- Watch for openings where a tortoise might become stuck and die in the heat.
- Pick up litter.

Gate Barrier and Locking Gate
- Install a Removable Gate Barrier.
- Look for examples in ‘Creating a Tortoise Habitat.’