

Eco-Friendly Window Options to Save Energy

In the popular trend to 'go green,' everyone wants to live in a way that is environmentally responsible, by saving energy and reducing waste. One of the biggest expenditure of home energy in most U.S. homes goes toward heating and cooling it. One of the most overlooked ways to save energy and money on utility bills is to pay attention to the efficiency of your windows.

Large traditional windows might be attractive, but they can be the biggest culprits of home heating loss for your whole house. There's no use going through all the trouble of living a green lifestyle and saving energy elsewhere if you have the wrong windows that allows heat from your home to go out easily.

Glass is actually a very good conductor, quickly moving energy from one window side to the other instead of keeping it in. The result is that heat is lost in winter, and cool air is lost in summer, causing air conditioning or furnaces to work harder. Sealing gaps to reduce air leaks around windows is a start, but the best way to prevent significant heat loss is to improve the efficiency of existing windows or install energy efficient models.

Green Window Treatments

One of the most economical ways to increase your windows' efficiency is to use retractable drapes or blinds with insulating design properties and linings to help keep heat where it needs to be. Retractable styles will give you the flexibility to shade the windows when you need to and allow sunlight in for light and warmth. Appropriate use of this feature can greatly improve the efficiency of your home windows

Storm Windows

Although storm windows don't increase the insulative properties of traditional windows, they can reduce air movement in and out of them, and can therefore increase energy efficiency and help to reduce energy bills for heating and cooling. Storm windows are available to fit most types of windows and can be installed on the window's exterior or interior, but should fit square on the primary window and be sealed to the opening. They should also be easy to remove for ventilation and cleaning.

Low-E Windows

If it's at all a possibility, investing in more energy efficient windows is always the best way to go. Look for low-emissivity coated or Low-E windows. These have a microscopically thin coating that suppresses radiant heat flow. Low-E windows are also double glazed, which lowers the heat flow even more. Higher end double glazed windows have gases between the panes such as argon or krypton. Though invisible, the gases become an insulating layer to keep heat where it needs to be. Energy saving windows increase your home's insulative ability and can really tighten up your home's thermal envelope, similar to the working of a greenhouse.

If you want to improve the efficiency of your air conditioning and furnace and save money on energy bills all year round, energy saving windows are the best option. For older traditional windows, seal all cracks, use energy efficient window treatments to your advantage, and install storm windows. But when circumstances allow, upgrade inefficient windows to higher efficiency low-E glass multiple glazed models. The investment will reap rewards immediately for your green home.