

Redesign to bring the outdoors in

THE QUEST for balmy, sun-baked days is moving a number of people to add sun rooms to their homes. And building a sun room isn't difficult, architects say.

Some home owners add such a room to their porches, some to other parts of the house.

Architect Mike Bhatler, a sun room advocate, said the trend "is quite wonderful. It's just another version of the front porch in the East."

That front porch, surrounded by sun wire netting, allowed people to sit outside and relax.

"IT WAS A NICE place to have breakfast," he said. "I remember because I grew up in the East."

For homes that don't have a front porch, the sun room gives a home a chance to have one.

He said he has seen many homes that look nice on the outside, "but inside they are like dungeons, dark and not appealing. A sun room certainly is one of the things that can brighten it up."

"There's nothing complicated about adding a sun room to a home, according to Bhatler, who said construction costs generally are on par with the rest of the house. It all depends on the construction material and how it's put together, he said.

The sun room normally has plenty of windows on all sides. The addition can be surrounded by glass walls and roof, built with one glass wall or even wrapped in plastic fabric.

The sun rooms should be located where they get sun and also prevailing breezes, he said.

Architect John Mehnert, a designer who favors the use of glass as a solar energy device, said, "In addition to bringing you more light and giving you an outdoor feel when you're indoors, the sun room serves a purpose of heat and light gain."

HE CONSIDERS SUCH additions as a way of getting more heat into the house without putting in a heating system.

Mehnert said he wished more people would put in sun rooms because

of energy reasons.

"But most people want it for other reasons," he said. "They see it as a nice place to relax."

Architect Stan Keniston, who had done a number of sun rooms, said the push to save energy is still there, but not as strong as it was a few years ago.

He said sun rooms need proper heat management. "Heavy materials such as thick wall board act as a thermal sponge and keeps heat," he says. "That way at night when it's cooler you will get some of the benefits of the sun."

TO AVOID SUMMER overheating of the sun room interior, the warm air has to be given some way to get outside. So sun rooms can have operable windows, skylights and vent fans with the fans controlled by thermostat.

Bhatler said designers once had to sell clients on adding a sun room. But now clients come to him wanting them included.

"I think the awareness has spread," he said. "A growing number

want it in the custom home or remodeling."

Getting a better view is a major motivation for putting in a sun room. The large glass area can provide views from not only the room itself but also from other connected rooms.

"For example, residents can look from the kitchen, living room or family room directly into the garden or the outdoor area," Mehnert said.

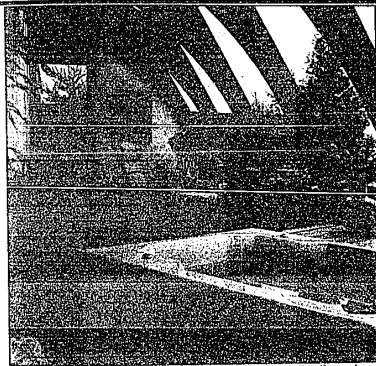
ONE SUN ROOM project by Bhatler attached a swimming pool area to a home.

"The pool could be reached from several rooms," he said. "We enclosed it in glass and it was done."

Movable glass panels were put in the roof, which could be opened when it got too hot.

In another sun room project, he put in a 10-by-20-foot room off the family room and kitchen. It could be reached via a screen door.

The space was used as a patio by the family. It even had its own sprinkler system for the vegetation, which included hanging plants and ground plants.



Adding a spa to a corner of a sun room makes it even more attractive and useful.

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