



Hanging new look on old windows

IF YOU think a window is just a hole in the wall, you're missing what's new in architectural style. Banish casement or sash treatments; windows aren't even rectangular anymore.

Say hello to clerestory windows, half-rounds, portholes, oversized squares, skinny oblongs — and that's just the beginning.

"Today windows do more than just admit light and air," says interior design writer Judith Findsen.

"The right windows can increase the usability of a room without costly reconstruction. And carefully selected and properly installed windows can reduce energy loss."

A really energy-efficient window will be double (or even triple) glazed, with two or three sheets of clear glass with an airspace in between. Double glazing is the most common, and a quality window will have double-glazed glass measuring at least 1/2-inch thick overall.

Low-emissivity glass has a thin, metallic, transparent coating. The finish reduces winter heat loss and summer heat gain and filters out ultraviolet rays that fade and deteriorate drapes, carpets and furniture.

New resilient weather-stripping materials — particularly rovel and thermoplastic rubber — retains its shape and effectiveness despite temperature variations.

Practical concerns aside, window options span the gamut from curtains to mini blinds. One of the newest twists in window dressing is the use of glass bricks in place of conventional windows.

Once seen only in older houses, this born-again building material is a perfect solution to lightening oddly shaped dark spaces. Equally at home as an interior design accent, glass bricks offer a maximum of privacy, eliminating the need for bulky cur-

tains or blinds.

Greenhouse windows — a variation on the reliable old bay window — are also in vogue. Easily installed, the windows provide a little green to urban space.

Along with skylights, they are one of the most requested "extras" in new buildings. Greenhouse windows also provide a low-cost alternative to the traditional last resort of the city gardener — window boxes.

While window boxes make attractive additions to country-style dwellings, greenhouse windows can blend with many architectural styles and moods and add to the resale value of a home.

For the individualist, stained glass offers the most personal of window treatments. Look for them in antique stores that specialize in architectural cast-offs, a good source for other design remnants like cast-iron fencing and solid wood doors.

Or commission a stained-glass artist to transform a favorite design into a glowing jewel-toned window.

Whether you choose traditional colored glass or a simpler, more modern design of beveled clear glass, there are some rules in getting your money's worth in a custom-designed window. First find an artist whose work you admire. Visit crafts fairs and studios in your area to look at samples of the work.

Be prepared to give the craftsman the following information:

- The size of the window you want to build.
- The location of the window.
- How much money you are willing to spend.

A low-cost alternative to traditional stained glass is hanging a series of colored glass ornaments at different levels in the window. The effect of sunlight streaming through the colors can be just as dramatic as a Tiffany-style

window, with the added benefit that the design can be changed at whim.

Sometimes the amount of sunlight coming into a window can cause problems. If your upholstery fabric or carpets are starting to fade, remember that tinted windows aren't just for limos anymore.

The most effective kinds of window tinting are the very thin window tint and insulation films. These are best applied by professionals to avoid the inevitable air bubbles. When completed, the final result compares to tinted window glass rather than a covering applied to clear glass.

Or install exterior curtains over the outside of a window area. Whether roll-up canvas or bamboo curtains, you can let down during the heat of the day when direct sun is on that side of the house.

A vintage-style home might look nice with an old-fashioned awning. Choose among somber neutrals — dark green, slate gray or chocolate brown — or pastel coded to your decorating scheme.

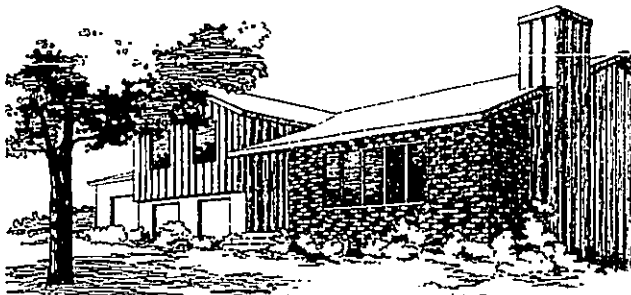
For those who like to shut out their sunlight from the inside, blinds still offer the most versatile options. They're not the clunky wood and metal slats our parents used.

The invention of mini blinds opened up a whole new high-tech look for windows and the new micro-minis (with slats of 1/2 inch) virtually disappear when they are opened. These slatted blinds have long been available in a wide range of decorator colors, but the newest look is graduated color and textured designs.

You'll even see blinds with designs silk-screened on the slats for a now-you-see-it, now-you-don't effect.

Vinyl vertical blinds are an excellent choice for the energy-conscious consumer: They close tightly, creating a storm window effect. With horizontal blinds, 30 percent more heat is lost in winter.

While vertical blinds don't yet come in the wide variety of colors offered by horizontal blind manufacturers, you can find vinyl louvers for unusual window shapes such as curved, slanted, notched, cathedral, bay and A-frames.



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