

New windows pose challenge for coverings

Today's new houses are full of glass that lets in light and banishes darkness. Some of the most sought-after features today are wide French doors and tall clerestory windows.

It's a challenge to cover these light-catchers when the window follows the lines of a vaulted ceiling, arches upward to the second story or is in an awkward location such as directly overhead.

But don't worry. Even skylights can be covered with special retractable blinds. Shutters can be made to fit Palladian windows. That round window above your bathtub can be decorated with an over-lay that looks like stained glass.

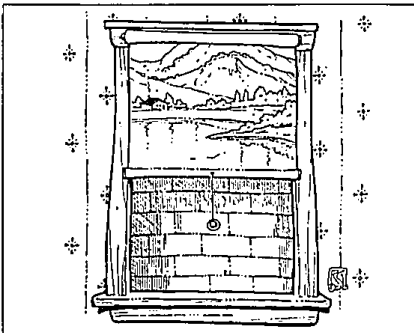
A professional interior designer may be your best bet for an effective treatment of problem windows. Many department stores and window covering specialty shops also employ experts who can help.

If you want to add color texture to your room, filter light or block it out, add privacy or enhance a view, there are a number of window treatments from which to choose.

Vertical blinds give you control over light, view and privacy while helping to reduce heat gain or loss through windows and doors. Materials include aluminum, PVC, synthetics, cotton and wool. Wood blinds lend a homey, traditional look; mini and micro aluminum blinds come in a rainbow of colors.

Window shades have been around forever, but newer versions filter or block sunlight better than before. They come in a wide range of colors, textures and patterns. You'll find many hem styles, pulls and trims too.

Alternatives to the flat shade include fabric



balloon shades, which drape in puffy folds, and pleated shades. Pleated shades offer the clean, uncluttered look of blinds but have the softness of draperies. They can be sheer, semi-sheer or opaque, and come in both solid colors and patterns.

YOU CAN USE shutters to cover just about any window, including semi-circular ones. Louvers come in a range of widths calculated in inches from 1 1/4 to 4 1/4; wider ones are referred to as "plantation shutters." The most popular is the 3 1/4 inches with a finish that is sandblasted to emphasize the grain.

Rolling shutters installed outside windows can add security to your home, as well as block light and reduce energy loss.

Designers often use valances to soften the vertical or horizontal geometry of blinds, shades and shutters. Valances can be color-coordinated to match other window treatments and furnishings; they also lend a finishing touch.

Nearly any fabric, in any color and texture, can be used to drape a window.

Some are so sheer that they seem almost to disappear. Others are heavy and opaque, closing the room to the outside and enhancing warmth and privacy.

Draperies that "puddle" on the floor are currently in vogue, but before you fall in love with the look, consider the practical side. These can be easy to trip over, could get sucked into the vacuum cleaner and are likely to attract lint and dirt.

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