

THE COOL FACTOR: Good SPF for the home

Solar screens, shades keep heat out, help reduce energy costs

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SPECIAL TO HOME



Motorized screens can be used to keep the sun off of patios as well as preventing damaging ultraviolet rays from entering the home. Photos courtesy Polar Shades Sun Control

Our home is our castle and these days we want our castle to be cool. Not the kind of cool that impresses the neighbors, but cool like about 76 degrees.

Steve Mevius, president of Polar Shades Sun Control in Las Vegas, can help you achieve that kind of cool.

Polar Shades has only one goal in mind: to make your house/castle cool by specializing in motorized shades, retractable awnings, retractable shades, interior-exterior sun shades, fixed window coverings, manual screen shades and patio covers.

"There are many reasons why homeowners should install solar screens," Mevius said. "Let's begin with energy efficiency. Solar screens absorb heat and keep it from entering the home. That alone can reduce energy bills up to 40 percent. Screens also prevent sun damage to furniture and carpets, while offering privacy and protection because you can see out but people outside can't see in."

Mevius said he demonstrates the effectiveness of solar screens by taking laser heat readings of carpets and furniture in customer's homes.

"I measure the temperature of a sofa that is receiving the sun's rays as it comes through a regular window. It might read 130 degrees (Fahrenheit) but as soon as I install shades, within minutes the temperature drops and the sofa becomes room temperature," he said.

The sophistication of solar screens can be seen in exterior retractable shades that are motorized so as the sun rises and hits the window, they automatically go down. When the sun goes down in the evening, the shades retract.

"Solar screens are a wonderful return on your investment," Mevius said. "I tell people that installing them is like taking \$1,000 and putting it in the stock market and then getting a 32 percent return on your money for the next 10 years. Who's going to pass on that? Unfortunately, there are still homeowners who aren't familiar with solar screens and I think it's just a lack of information. I know many people who didn't like them when they first came out because they were just dark black or brown screens, but now there are a variety of trim and fabric colors to match home exteriors."

At Accent Awnings in Las Vegas, Jackie Syddall installs several types of screens including those that fit outdoor patios.

"We have shades up to 20 feet wide that we make to order," he said. "Cost is based on width and height, similar to when people buy vertical blinds. Once installed, it becomes 20 degrees cooler and people can sit outside because the sun doesn't beat down on them. You know that a concrete patio becomes unbearable when the sun hits it and all that heat reflects up. We'll take care of that by fitting shades around all three sides of the patio. They're called box shades and are 90 percent dense, which means they block 90 percent of the UV (ultraviolet) rays. I know. I have one on my own patio."

Jim and Barbara Red have a different slant on solar screens with Screenmobile, an independently owned and operated mobile screening service that comes to your home. The Screenmobile is a self-sufficient trailer where all raw materials are brought to the home and manufactured on site prior to placement.

"We do it right the first time and never have to come back because something doesn't fit properly," Barbara Red said. "Our solar screens are made with Suntex, a product that deflects UV heat rays. By keeping glass cool, it keeps rooms cool and that's why they're installed on the exterior of the home. But we also do screen doors, insect screens, sliders, security doors, pet doors and just anything else involving screens."

Mevius said homeowners are installing screens this summer with the idea of a staycation, that strange word that is becoming more familiar as families schedule vacation time in their homes or backyards.

"What I hear is 'vacation destination: backyard,'" he said. "What I see are people upgrading various areas of their homes to make them more comfortable and livable."