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RETRO-FITTING YOUR HOME FOR SUMMER IN ADELAIDE

Is your home a haven from the heat ...or is it a hot-box that offers little relief from the scorching sun?

As a Building Consultant I am often asked about ways of cooling a house in summer. The key elements are shading, insulation and ventilation. Some general suggestions are offered below to make your home more comfortable ...they may also reduce your power consumption.

1. add external shades to windows and walls that are exposed to the summer sun. Allow an airspace of 30cm between an external blind and the window. Roll-up blinds will allow the sun into your home in winter
2. insulate your ceiling to R3.0 level and your walls (if possible) to R2.0 using a natural fibre insulation like wool ...and venting the roof space will also help
3. pergolas and verandas are useful shade additions, but they should be vented to reduce the build-up of hot air next to the walls
4. cross-ventilate your home fully in the coolest part of the day/night to exhaust accumulated hot air and gasses
5. add ceiling sweep fans to living rooms and bedrooms ...moving the air over your skin will make you feel cooler
6. if you have raised floors you can draw cooler air from under the floors with fans ...and exhaust the air thru adjustable vents
7. check your local climate (hills, sea, city, plains) for the direction of prevailing winds in summer ... so you can catch a breeze
8. divert greywater from your bath/shower/basin to feed trees/shrubs/lawns near the house. Plants are 'sun sponges'.
Note! Do not allow water to collect next the footings of your house, because it may cause structural damage
9. reduce the use of appliances that generate heat in your home
10. zone the coolest room (usually on the south side) from other areas of the house as a cool 'retreat' area
11. when all else fails ... try wearing a damp T-shirt

Longer term options may include:

- Planting deciduous trees on the east and west side of your house, but not close to the walls
- Deflecting cool breezes towards your home with a hedge or garden structure
- Painting dark roofs and walls with light colours

If you still need an air-conditioner then consider an evaporative cooling unit. They use less energy and are suited to Adelaide's drier climate.

Shading, insulation and ventilation are the key elements in cooling, but each property has its own 'micro' climate which should be assessed individually

Jack Metcalf, Building Consultant, can be contacted for building advice on phone 08 8261 9049 or refer to website www.jmetcalf.net

