

Today's energy crunch revives the porch idea

By LIS KING

Yesteryear's sun porch may well become the energy-efficient room addition you've been seeking. For, if the exposure is right, a glass-walled porch becomes a natural solar "collector," and its proclivity for greenery and casual furniture makes it the ideal, year-round "everything room" for the entire family.

But, it takes planning to convert an open porch into an inviting indoor space, so here, from the Tile Council of America, are some tips and tactics.

- The energy efficiency aspect works well *only* if the porch faces the quadrant from southeast to southwest. And, naturally the sun must have free passage into the new room.

Deciduous trees that provide summer shade are usually fine, but make sure that their branches don't obstruct too much winter sun.

- The best porch rooms feature floors that provide good thermal storage, and one excellent combination is concrete and ceramic tile.

- The heavy quarry tile types and pavers are great choices for such floors. They will store the sun's heat during the day and release it gradually to keep the room warm after the sun has gone. During the summer months these floors can also collect the night breezes to help



THE BEAUTY OF THIS PORCH FLOOR is more than skin deep. For the white ceramic tile tops a concrete slab, and together the two elements store solar heat to warm up the room after the sun is down.

cool the room.

- Ceramic tile's good looks and easy care suit this room, which is likely to become one of the most active in the house.

Tile in nature hues goes especially well with glass-walled rooms that seem to bring in the outdoors.

Unglazed quarry tiles and pavers now come in colors from sand to sepia, but remember that dark colors absorb heat better.

- You may be able to get more heat than you need for your porch room out of this project. It all depends on your location, the amount of thermal mass, etc.

If you have heat to spare, use it in adjoining rooms. Doors and/or registers will circulate the air.

- If the porch room's back wall is exposed to the sun and you want to soak up extra heat, make it a thermal storage area, too.

A concrete block wall will do

the trick, but that isn't very pretty, of course. So dress it up with good-looking ceramic tile. A brick-shaped tile in a neutral color should flatter most jobs.

- There are other ways to add extra thermal mass to your new porch room. Masonry planters wrapping around the porch's window walls look as well as they function. Tile them to match the floor.

A long tile-topped counter, using black, water-filled drums as bases, is excellent for thermal storage. Water-filled drums or tubes may also be ranked along the back wall to store heat, but in a conventional porch room they are both too bulky and unsightly.

- You can have a ceramic tile floor even if you're working with a wood-floor base. But,

remember, tile shouldn't be installed over a springy floor. Nail down loose flooring and, if that doesn't do the trick, cover it with exterior-grade plywood (at least 3/4" thick) before tiling.

- If your porch has a wood base, check it well before you

start any new construction. After all, you want solid underpinnings.

If you find rot or termites, boards must be replaced. Use new lumber that is treated to resist decay. Installing a sheet-metal termite shield at the same time is a good idea.

- In climates with freezing winter temperatures, consider installing a masonry foundation around the porch's perimeter. Many wooden porches are built with a 2-inch or more slope away from the house to drain off rainwater, so jack up the edge.

- The best-looking porch rooms play up their close-to-nature roles. Lots of greenery is a must. Rattan and wicker furniture comes naturally, but today's slight-scaled modular seating would be perfect for a long, narrow porch, too.

Allow space for a table for informal meals, homework, bill-paying and you name it. Think of stringing up a hammock for summer lazing and snow gazing. Add pillows and a comforter to the hammock. Now you've got a guest room, too!

Tree planting tips

Spring is a good time of year to add new trees and shrubs to the yard. If you plan to add a new tree or shrub, here are some tips which will help you provide the best possible growing conditions to help them thrive:

Dig a hole about twice the diameter of the root ball, placing the soil to one side (preferably on a large tarp to protect the lawn).

Next, fill the hole with water and let drain. Then, mix an equal part of Canadian sphagnum peat moss with the soil which has been removed from the hole.

The sphagnum peat moss conditions the soil assuring that water and nutrients stay at root level where they are needed.

Fill the hole halfway with the peat moss/soil mixture and water thoroughly. Set the tree or shrub in the hole making sure the original soil line matches the soil level of the new location.

Loosen the burlap around the root ball and fill the hole with the remaining soil/sphagnum peat moss mixture. Tamp the soil and water thoroughly. Leave a slight depression to collect rainfall.

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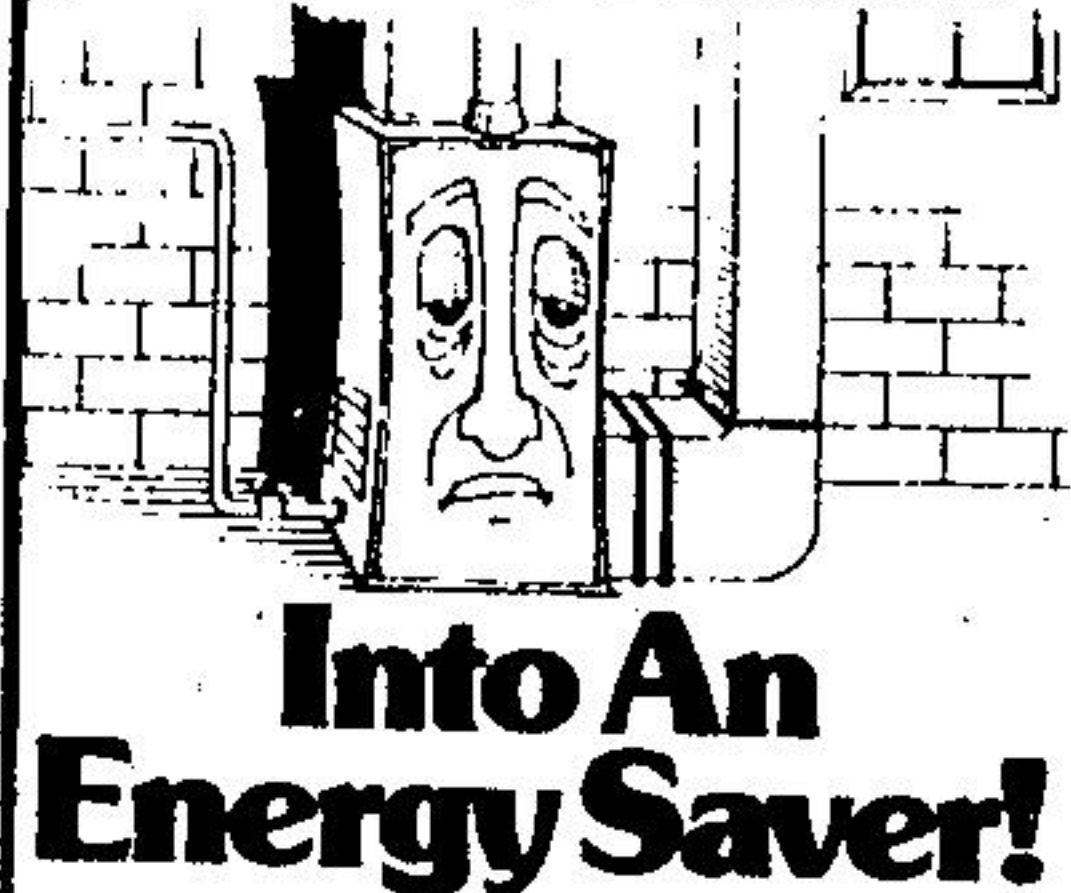


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