

Sunspace designs for your home add light all year

Three special purpose sunspaces are in common use: the solar collection space, the greenhouse and the more popular sunroom.

Solar collection space: Used principally as a source of heat during cold weather, solar collection spaces are designed to gather energy from the sun during the day and transfer it to the rest of the building by fans and ducts.

Solar collection spaces have no auxiliary heating and are insulated from the rest of the building. During the winter, temperatures can vary widely between day and night. Despite its cold evening tempera-

tures, however, a solar collection space can contribute to reduced energy bills.

Greenhouses: Greenhouses are designed to provide optimum conditions for growing plants over an extended season. Auxiliary heating is required to maintain temperatures when insufficient solar energy is available. In addition, humidity and condensation must be carefully controlled to avoid moisture problems.

Greenhouses often consume more auxiliary energy than they collect from the sun and therefore can be a net energy liability. However, the benefits of having an area

dedicated to growing plants and vegetables can outweigh the energy costs.

Sunrooms: Sunrooms are designed to be lived in-year round, especially during the winter. On sunny days, this design can provide some heat to the main building but at night or on heavily overcast days auxiliary heating is required to maintain comfortable temperatures.

Sunrooms should be oriented within 30 degrees of south for optimum performance. They should have a solid, insulated roof with an overhang to reduce overheating in the summer and heat loss in the winter.

Skylights can be added to allow light into the back of the sunroom.


These sunspaces typically have a large south wall of vertical double glazed glass and solid, well insulated east and west walls. Sunroom floors and wall surfaces should be made of heavy energy absorbing materials such as tile, brick or masonry.

Windows should open at the floor and ceiling levels to improve cross ventilation and reduce overheating in the summer.

Before beginning construction of any type of sunspace, check with local authorities for building regulations and permits.

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