

Some inexpensive ways to keep your home cool

If just the thought of your home during the hot summer months makes you perspire, wipe your brow and look on the bright side—there are many relatively inexpensive ways to turn your home into a cool sanctuary.

One of the easiest ways to beat the heat is to block out the sun by closing your curtains and blinds during the daytime. This is particularly effective for windows on the south and west sides of your home. If most of your window coverings are made of lace or sheers, consider investing in curtains made of heavy fabric, thick blinds or interior shutters—they will do a better job of shielding your home from the sun.

Installing awnings over your outside windows will also help keep down the heat and can enhance the appearance of your home.

In addition, try opening your windows early in the morning and closing them by mid-morning when the outside temperature begins to rise. In the evening, open them again when the temperature cools off.

Fans are another inexpensive way to keep your home cool. They work well during the day and night.

To get maximum use out of them, leave the doors between adjoining rooms open to keep air moving throughout your home. Make sure you buy them early in the summer, as they are usually sold out when you need them most!

To combat humid weather, you may want to buy a dehumidifier. This appliance removes moisture in the air by temporarily cooling it as it travels through the dehumidifier. These portable units are available in many sizes, so shop around for one that is most suitable for your home.

Landscaping

If you plan to settle down in your home for many years to come, consider planting large deciduous trees such as maple and oak that will shield your windows from the sun. The best locations for these trees are on the east, south and west sides of your home.

If you need to replace your roof and siding, avoid dark colours such as dark brown and black since they absorb heat.

Air Conditioning

The most effective way to keep your home cool is by investing in central air conditioning.

However, this can be an expensive solution to beating the heat. On average, it costs from \$2,000 to \$3,000 to install central air conditioning. Before you decide to invest in this system, keep in mind that your home needs duct work to carry the cool air through your home. If it doesn't have it, it is still possible to install central air, but it can cost as much as \$8,000 and up.

If central air is out of your price range, a window unit is a less expensive option. You can install your own small unit for as little as \$300 or have one installed for as much as \$1,400. These units work well for cooling a specific area of your home such as a bedroom or office. Keep in mind that it will obstruct your window, so make sure it fits properly.

This unit can be noisy as well, so choose one that has a reasonable noise level.

Surprisingly enough, heat pumps are another good way to cool down your home. Heat pumps work by transferring heat from your home to the outdoors in the summer and reversing that process in the winter. There are ground-source pumps which pull coolness or heat out of the ground or groundwater and air-source pumps which draw from the air.

Attic Ventilation

Even though your attic can be easily forgotten, keep in mind that it can be a major contributing factor to the heat that builds up in your home. So, if your attic isn't properly ventilated, you may want to install a natural

ventilation system.

This system makes use of natural air flow and helps push the heat out. A power ventilation system is another option. It expels hot air and draws in cooler air, using mechanical vents.

During a heat wave, it is best to cut down on the use of lights and appliances whenever possible. For example, coordinate washing and ironing for early morning or evening when the temperature is lower. This is also the time to test out your microwave cooking and avoid using the stove.

□ This article is provided by local realtors and the Ontario Real Estate Association (OREA) for the benefit of consumers in the real estate market.

Chattels, fixtures

Put it in writing before you sell

If you're thinking of selling your home in the near future, have you given much thought to what you plan to leave with the home and what you'd like to take with you? What about the washer and dryer or the fridge and stove? Or how about the heirloom chandelier in the dining room?

While these may not seem like important concerns right now, your failure to address them in your listing and the agreement of purchase and sale could lead to a major misunderstanding with a potential buyer somewhere down the road.

And the last thing you'll want is the loss of the sale of your home due to a dispute or misunderstanding over a relatively minor item.

Your realtor will guide you through the listing process and will ask you what you want to include in the sale. But it's a good idea to make up a list before meeting your realtor, to be sure you don't forget anything.

He or she will explain that fixtures are permanent improvements to a property which normally stay with the property as part of the sale. For instance, if you've upgraded your wiring or your heating system, these are considered to be permanent fixtures.

However, keep in mind that the law is not always crystal clear about what constitutes a fixture. There are circumstances where you

Fixtures are permanent improvements to a property which normally stay with the property as part of the sale

may plan to remove something that might ordinarily be considered a fixture—like the heirloom chandelier Aunt Matilda gave you.

Most purchasers would assume this type of fixture is included in the sale unless you specify the contrary in the listing. It is also absolutely necessary you set out these stipulations in the agreement of purchase and sale.

Other items like water heaters and softeners are often rented and are not owned by the vendor. In this circumstance, the items should be excluded from the purchase price and the purchaser should be asked to assume the rental.

Chattels

It's a fairly common practice for vendors to include items which would normally be considered as chattels in the selling price. Appliances and window coverings are common examples. If these types of items are to be included in your sale, your realtor should give a precise description of them and state their location within the property.

Other items to consider are lawn ornaments, smoke alarms and built-in vacuum cleaners. Generally, these types of things are left with the home, but some people still like to take things with them. If you're one of these people, clearly state in writing what won't be included in the sale.

Most realtors can recant "horror stories" about homeowners taking their wall-to-wall broom with them—without specifying this in the listing or agreement of purchase and sale. Others can attest to the type of vendor who insists on taking lightbulbs and heat registers.

If in Doubt...

If there is any doubt about a particular item, your realtor will include it in the list of items to be included or excluded from the purchase price. That way, if there is any dispute, the situation has already clearly been addressed.

If you have any concerns, talk to your realtor. As a trained professional, he or she will be able to guide you smoothly through the selling process and answer any questions you may have.

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