

Home & Garden

Make your home feel like summer all year round

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With the snow now on the ground, the warm, sunny, floral appeal of summer seems like a distant memory.

But it doesn't have to be that way.

Making your home feel like summer year-round can be fun and economical.

Solariums and skylights are the obvious solutions to bringing more sunshine and the feel of summer into your home.

But unless they are part of a properly-designed home improvement project, these features can be expensive and sometimes disappointing.

Unless they have appropriate shading, skylights and solariums can result in an uncomfortable home environment in summer, even with air conditioning to offset the extra heat.

There are many other ways to create an airy, bright, warm feeling in your home, even during the dreariest of weather. Here's where to start:

Let the light shine through

Windows and doors bring air, sunshine and a view into your home.

Begin by making sure they're sparkling clean. Then decide if you want to incorporate the view into your room or not. A view of a brick wall will bring little warmth to a room.

A view of a lake, garden or interesting architecture, on the other hand, will be pleasant to look at regardless of the season.

If sunshine and air are all you want, use shutters or blinds that can let in light and easily block out an unpleasant view. Use window coverings such as light fabric swags and valances to create a warm, sum-



Windows and plants can give your home a summery feel - even on the coldest day of the year.

Flowering and foliage plants will add the finishing touches needed to make any home feel like summer all year.

But, remember, selecting and placing plants in a room is as strategic as selecting and placing furnishings.

House plants can play a dramatic role in the design and feel of a room.

However, they should serve only as a backdrop to your furnishings and as a way of adding warmth, contrast and colour to the room.

You want a room to feel pleasant and comfortable, not like a greenhouse.

Fit the look, size and shape of house plants to the available spaces in the room.

Tall, fan-shaped plants are great for corners; low, bushy shapes are best used on table tops, counters and window sills.

You can use plants to fill empty spaces, such as an old fireplace; or hang them in front of windows to camouflage an unpleasant view or dull outdoor weather.

Before setting off to purchase new house plants, don't forget to bring in flowering plants grown outdoors in the summer such as wax begonias, geraniums and impatiens.

Not only will you be extending their flowering season, you will be adding warmth and colour to your home at no cost.

This article was submitted by the Ontario Real Estate Association.

mery feeling.

Add some warmth

What's underfoot inside your home can leave your feet feeling pretty icy during cold, damp days, especially when shuffling around today's popular ceramic floors.

Area rugs in the bathroom, below a table, beneath chairs along eat-in areas, in the living room, hallways and bedrooms, can add warmth and colour.

You can coordinate them by colour, texture and size and add them in many different places.

Use lots of mirrors

Strategically placing mirrors directly opposite a window or door, for example, can reflect both light and view, making a small room seem bigger and brighter.

Adding a shelf under a mirror and placing plants on it will add even more colour and warmth to a room.

Add flower power

With track lighting now available in a wide array of decorator styles, colours and sizes, there is no limit to what you can accomplish.

Create a breeze with ceiling fans

A ceiling fan in any room of your home will not only improve air circulation, but provide great lighting.

Ceiling fans will give you that breezy feeling even on the duldest days of the year.

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Caulking prevents building structure damage

NC - Caulking is used inside the home on fixed joints to keep warm interior air from escaping into cavities in the wall and roof and then outdoors.

Stopping this flow of warm air not only saves energy, it also prevents condensation from forming in the building envelope. This in turn can damage the insulation, interior finishes and the building structure.

Tips on caulking:

- Cheap caulking may not last. Consider spending a bit more and avoid having to replace it every year.
- Make sure the caulking adheres to the surface you intend to apply it to.
- Look for a brand that suits your needs. For example, can it be painted? Is it heat resistant?
- Caulking should be flexible enough to allow for the natural shifting of your home.
- Interior caulking is different from exterior caulking; some types of exterior caulking contain harmful compounds and should not be used inside.