TOTAL HOME

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Say good-bye to cave lighting this spring

By DANIEL ASPELL
Total Home

As soon as the earth's orbit rolls around to where the sun comes shining through, a sudden transformation overtakes all of us living above the equator. Deprived of warmth and sunlight through the winter months, we tend to run outdoors and soak up as many rays as possible, even if the temperature is barely in the 50s F or 16 Celsius. But if you think that you have to go outside for those golden rays this spring, go back inside ... and realize what you can do to improve the quality of natural light in your home.

The very first step should involve looking at your interior window treatments. Those heavy drapes are great for insulating the house in the winter, but March is the time to pack them off to the dry cleaners and store them away until November. Replace them with light, translucent drapes, shades or blinds.

To really let in natural light, consider a skylight or roof window. While those who are pretty handy around the house can install these themselves, they're actually pretty affordable even when installed by a professional. Besides, they may even save you money in the long run. Adding natural light to rooms means less wasted electricity and light bulb replacements, and depending on the skylight's location, may lower heating bills in the winter. Spread out over the years, they're actually wise investments, and certainly add value to a home.

Roof windows are a nice addition anywhere, but are particularly appreciated in bedrooms. There's nothing like going to sleep under the stars, then waking up to the morning sun. Roof windows are often larger than skylights, and installed so they can be opened for easy cleaning and ventilation. Usually a heavy-duty glass is used, with heat-control glazing to moderate the amount of warmth they add to the interior. Of course, they can also be fitted with shades or blinds. If you're thinking of turning the attic into livable space, a roof window is the place to start.

Skylights are more versatile than roof windows, as they come in all

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