

Beat the heat

With a long hot summer looming, cool comfort at home is a must. But air-conditioning is only part of the story.

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While soaking up the gorgeous spring weather, it is easy to forget those stinking hot summer days lurking around the corner that can transform your home from haven to sizzling sweatbox overnight. The good news is there's no need to sweat it this summer – with a little bit of advance prep you can beat the heat head on. What's more, there are plenty of relatively simple measures available to take the sting out of the sun and keep you refreshingly cool indoors – without costing the earth.

Architect Garry Baverstock – Western Australia's leading authority on energy-efficient design – reckons that when the heat is on, people are far too quick to reach for the air-conditioner remote control. He says that, in terms of design, many houses are drastically under-armed to battle Perth's steamy temperatures and much can be done to improve this.

When it comes to heat-reducing home design, the number one big gun in

your arsenal against the sun's relentless rays is good shading and ventilation.

"The first thing you must do is keep the sun off your windows in summer," says Garry.

"Tinted windows and partial shade is not good enough; in hot weather you need 100 percent shade. There's up to one kilowatt of heating coming through the window when the sun shines on the glass. Not only that, the glass gets hot and it makes it feel hotter than it really is because of the radiation.

"The best way to keep the glass cool is by shading the outside by using verandahs, shade devices such as drop-down blinds and strategically placed landscaping."

Garry suggests planting gum trees on the east and west sides of your home for shade in summer while, on the north-east, north-west and north sides, planting deciduous trees allows for winter sun.



Window Treatments

The benefit of sunscreen blinds is that they offer heat and glare protection while preserving the view. The Blinds Gallery uses Mermet sunsreen fabrics (woven with a glass fibre core for strength) that reduce energy consumption by between 23 and 33 percent, depending on colour. Blockout roller blinds have fantastic room-darkening qualities, protect from the heat and come in sleek minimalist designs. Team with sunsreen blinds on a double bracket to get the best of both worlds.

Cedar shutters can be hung internally or externally and, due to the cellular structure of cedar, create interior air spaces with an insulation value higher than most woods and much higher than brick or concrete. Cedar is also a good sound insulator.

LEFT: Roller sunsreen blinds by The Blinds Gallery.