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Eco-Friendly Home Additions

With the "green" trend continually growing, many homeowners are swapping old air conditioning units, heaters and appliances with more energy efficient models. While purchasing ENERGY STAR® appliances and green rated products is a major step forward in being environmentally conscious, there are additional options for homeowners to take eco-friendly living to the next level.

Energy neutral upgrades and products, ranging from awnings to radiant barriers, provide an additional reduction in cooling energy consumption and costs associated with even the most energy-efficient appliances.

According to futurist Mark Justman of Social Technologies, a global research and consulting firm, there is a growing nucleus of homeowners who value ethical consumption, but often consider a big appliance purchase the only solution.

"While investing in an ENERGY STAR appliance or green product is extremely beneficial for energy consumption, there are many additional energy-neutral products that are just as economical," said Justman. "To top it off, they also have benefits beyond energy efficiency like convenience or aesthetics, making it more of an investment rather than an expense."

Energy-neutral home solutions that Justman recommends include:

· **Awnings** - when added above a window or door, an awning reduces the amount of heat that enters a home by blocking the sun's rays from penetrating the glass. Keeping excess heat out reduces the load on the air conditioner, allowing the unit to cool the space more efficiently. Learn more at: www.awningstoday.com/rel/energyneutral.htm

· **Solar window screens** - screens that install on the outside of windows, allowing protection from the sun's heat and a little added privacy.

· **Radiant barriers** - structures made of highly reflective material, typically installed in attics, that reflect radiant heat upward, preventing it from entering the home.

· **Conservation landscaping** - includes planting of shade trees or hedges near a house to block sun from penetrating windows during the summer. Conservation landscaping can also act as a windbreak, protecting homes from icy winds in the winter.

· **Caulking and weather stripping** - when installed around windows, doors and cracks, it reduces air infiltration, keeping cool air in during the summer and out during the winter.

· **Programmable thermostats** - they automatically adjust a home's temperature settings, allowing homeowners to save energy while away or sleeping. Programmable thermostats are better for the environment, since using less energy helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with energy production.

With heating and cooling accounting for about 56 percent of the energy used in a typical U.S. home, according to the U.S. Department of Energy, homeowners are able to utilize energy neutral products to improve their home's energy efficiency.

"Solar radiation through glass is responsible for nearly 20 percent of the load on an air conditioner," said Michelle Sahlin, managing director of the Professional Awning Manufacturers Association (PAMA). "Awnings have the ability to limit the sun's rays through glass, which directly reduces the impact of global warming from greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, if a neighborhood collectively uses awnings, it reduces the overall demand on the energy infrastructure, subsequently preventing black outs."

Tips For Selecting A Generator

If you are considering a backup generator purchase, there are important sizing and code requirements that you need to know to insure a safe and adequate standby generator installation.

Sizing the generator takes into account the total kilowatt (kW) requirements of the electrical equipment to be served.

Undersizing can leave you frustrated while oversizing is just a waste of money.

Pay particular attention to anything with an electric motor.

Starting a motor requires three to seven times the current used during normal operation.

Allowing for this startup or inrush of current when sizing the generator is crucial.

Electrical connections to the wiring system of the home, farm, or business requires a double-throw transfer switch.

This is not a do-it-yourself project! Involve an experienced electrical contractor to insure a safe, reliable installation that meets all local and national code requirements.

Another safety consideration is where the generator is placed. Unless you vent the generator fumes to the outside, never locate it inside a building, garage or basement.

The Eagle Stop

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