

## Redesign ideas for bringing outdoors in

By Herb Lawrence  
Copley News Service

The quest for balmy, sunbathed days is moving a number of people to add sun rooms to their homes. And building a sun room isn't difficult, architects say.

Some home owners add such a room to their patios, some to other parts of the house.

Architect Mike Batter, a sun room advocate, said the trend "is quite wonderful. It's just another version of the front porch in the East."

That front porch, surrounded by some wire netting, allowed people to sit outside and relax.

"It was a nice place to have breakfast," he said, "I remember because I grew up in the East."

For homes that don't have a front porch, the sun room gives a home a chance to have one.

He said he has seen many homes that look nice on the outside, "but inside they are like dungeons, dark and not appealing. A sun room certainly is one of the things that can brighten it up."

There's nothing complicated about adding a sun room to a home, according to Batter, who

said the construction costs generally are on a par with the rest of the house. It all depends on the construction material and how it's put together, he said.

The sun room normally has plenty of windows on all sides. The addition can be surrounded by glass walls and roof, built with one glass wall or even wrapped in plastic fabric.

The sun rooms should be located where they get sun and also prevailing breezes, he said.

Architect John Mehnert, a designer who favors the use of glass as a solar energy device, said, "In addition to bringing you more light and giving you an outdoor feel when you're indoors, the sun room serves a purpose of heat and light gain."

He considers such additions as a way of getting more heat into the house without putting in a heating system.

Mehnert said he wished more people would put in sun rooms because of energy reasons.

"But most people want it for other reasons," he said. "They see it as a nice place to relax."

Architect Stan Keniston, who had done a number of sun rooms, said the push to save energy is still there, but not as strong as it was a few years ago.

He said sun rooms need proper heat management. "Heavy materials such as thick wallboard act

as a thermal sponge and keeps heat," he says. "That way at night when it's cooler you will get some of the benefits of the sun."

To avoid summer overheating of the sun room interior, the warm air has to be given some way to get outside. So sun rooms can have operable windows, skylights and vent fans with the fans controlled by thermostat.

Batter said designers once had to sell clients on adding a sun room. But now clients come to him wanting them included.

"I think the awareness has spread," he said. "A growing number want it in the custom home or remodeling."

Getting a better view is a major motivation for putting in a sun room. The large glass area can provide views from not only the room itself but also from other connected rooms.

"For example, residents can look from the kitchen, living room or family room directly into the garden or the outdoor area," Mehnert said.

One sun room project by Batter attached a swimming pool area to a home.

"The pool could be reached from several rooms," he said. "We enclosed it in glass and it was domed."

Movable glass panels were put in the roof, which could be opened when it got too hot.

In another sun room project, he put in a 10 by 20-foot room off the family room and kitchen. It could be reached via a screen door.

The space was used as a patio by the family. It even had its own sprinkler system for the vegetation, which included hanging plants and ground plants.

Cost for adding a sun room can differ, depending on the material, contractor and approach taken. Sometimes people want a wall knocked down so the sun room can be added, which will add \$500 or more to the cost of the project.

The cost of adding a sun room can range from \$30 to \$90 per square foot, depending on the type of material used. The cost also includes the foundation of the additional room.

In addition to having a contractor add a room, home owners can use kits that include the glass walls.

One supplier of sun room kits is New York-based Four Season Greenhouses.

A typical 10 by 16-foot greenhouse addition costs \$10,000 to \$15,000 including installation, according to Four Seasons.

The company uses a built-in shading system and special heat-mirror glass that reflects the heat back inside in winter and prevents heat from entering in the summer. Various tints can be obtained in the glass, blocking intense rays.

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