



Photo courtesy West Coast Windows

Enjoying the view

what's in vogue in 2008

BY BELINDA BRUCE

Beyond simple functionality, windows can add exceptional value and personality to homes and buildings. Current trends in windows are a reflection of social responsibility, architectural innovations, the latest technologies and contemporary fashions.

star status

Thermal performance is all the rage in window design. Who wouldn't like to save on utility bills, not to mention save three quarters of a tonne of greenhouse gas emissions annually? That's the promise if all original windows and doors in an average older home are replaced with Energy Star qualified windows and doors.

Energy Star ratings designate certified high-performance, energy efficient products. For windows, the rating indicates the ability to minimize summer heat gain and reduce heat loss in winter. With the advent of stricter energy performance regulations for new buildings, the enforcement of energy-saving levels on new windows and

increased public awareness of resource efficient products, making an environmentally friendly choice has never been easier. Energy efficient glazing and dual pane insulating glass are already standard technologies offered by many window manufacturers, however, the newest glazing option — Low E III with Argon gas — further reduces solar gain and diminishes UV rays that can damage carpets, flooring and furnishings by up to 95 per cent. The challenge is marrying Energy Star standards with aesthetically pleasing window designs. Competitive window companies are rising to the challenge with a variety of designs, patterns and shapes.

Saving the provincial sales tax provides further incentive for B.C. homeowners, builders and designers to purchase Energy Star windows. And until March 31, 2011 (through Natural Resources Canada's ecoENERGY Retrofit program), homeowners, small and medium-sized businesses, public institutions and industrial facilities can qualify for federal grants by improving the energy efficiency of their homes and buildings to reduce the impact on the environment.

true colours

In the past, exterior windows were only available in white and beige. Today homeowners can express their individuality with an array of unique colours and custom hues. A new colour application process specifically designed for vinyl has opened up the range of possibilities — everything from basic black to rich cranberry. In keeping with green technologies, the colours are created using waterborne paints, which are environmentally friendly with no lacquers or harsh chemicals.

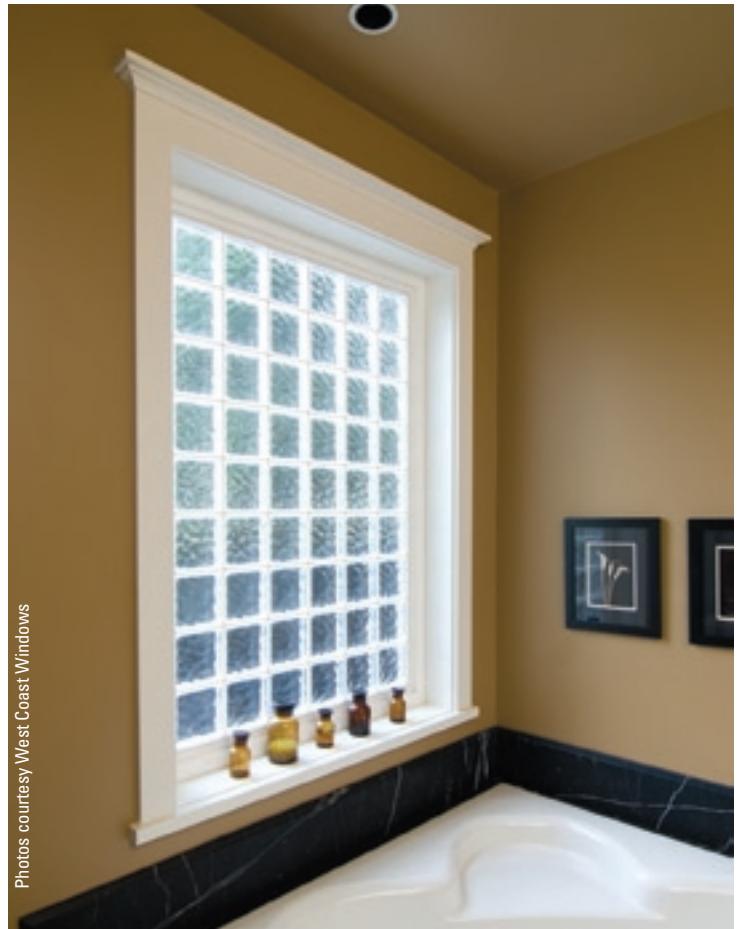
versatile vinyl

Many homeowners are changing old aluminum windows to vinyl. Aluminum is a poor insulator, allowing for heat transfer and condensation, which can lead to mould production and health concerns. Vinyl is structurally sound, neutral — meaning it doesn't transfer cold — and best of all, less expensive than aluminum. What's more, vinyl offers the same capping capabilities as aluminum for superior hybrid windows, retaining the richness and warmth of wood on the inside with maintenance-free protection on the outside.

rooms with a view and brighter light

Creating or enhancing dramatic views and maximizing natural light have become priorities in new construction and renovation projects. Today's homes average 40 to 60 windows whereas most older homes have 20 or less. Rooms with tall ceilings and a multitude of large windows that make the most of daylight and panoramic vistas have become de rigeur in residences and new buildings. Tubular skylights — the latest innovation in skylight technology — provide another option for optimizing natural light. More compact and easier to install than regular skylights, they can also be fitted with internal light kits to serve as electric lights at night.

Belinda Bruce is a Vancouver writer, editor and musician and is currently managing editor of Coastlines magazine. For more than 30 years, West Coast Windows has been manufacturing custom vinyl windows and doors for new construction and renovation projects. The company is known for its progressive lean manufacturing processes and energy efficient windows that speak to luxurious style and high performance. For more information call 1.888.363.7832.



Photos courtesy West Coast Windows



Whether working on a new construction or renovation project, the type of window chosen — from a picture window to a large bay window, Hy-Lite block windows to sliders — can enhance a home's style, control the view, optimize sunlight and improve ventilation.

