

How to heatproof your home

Here are essential adjustments to make as summers get more extreme, says *Jayne Dowle*

If you really want to heatproof your home this summer, you not only need to change what you buy for your property — but how you act inside it.

“In other countries, homes and behaviour patterns may be more geared to coping with extreme heat than we are in the UK,” says Suzy Reading, a chartered psychologist.

“So, it would benefit us to think creatively and question ingrained habits about how we use our environment.

“During times of extreme heat it’s not just OK to deviate from usual routines — it’s often necessary.”

Uprooting cosy rituals geared to hearth and home is a wrench, and may overturn habits you hold dear. Closing curtains in the day, for example, is still the sign of a death in the family; sleeping anywhere other than the bedroom may be unthinkable — and switching off the oven in favour of salad is beyond the pale.

“Think like a Spaniard,” says Dennis Wessels, spokesman for Duux, a Dutch air-conditioning company.

“Hotter summers are quickly becoming the norm in the UK. Taking small incremental steps when dealing with the heat can create the biggest impact. Just the slightest shifts in perspective will do



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wonders for your wellbeing.”

Roof

Roofs, the very foundation of an effective building, are buckling during heatwaves. Direct Building Products found that Google searches for “emergency roof repairs near me” increased by 5,000 per cent following the heatwave at the beginning of June.

“Heat damage can cause roof shingles to curl, crack or split, creating gaps in the roof for rainwater to leak into,” says Chris Ross, director of Direct Building Products. “Heavy rainfall risks flooding, damaging the interior and your possessions. Water leaks create excess moisture which

leads to the development of mould and mildew. This has serious consequences for your health, including respiratory problems and allergies.”

Inspect your roof regularly — a drone camera is a bonus, if you have access to one. Signs of heat damage include curling, buckling, brittle, cracked or split shingles, blistering or bubbling on flat roofs, faded or discoloured roof tiles, granule loss from asphalt and a warping roof structure.

Homeowners should always seek reputable professional advice about roofing problems, but Ross’s recommended heatproof fixes include: choosing roofing



excess water evaporate through their leaves,” explains Stewart. “This process helps them to cool down while taking heat out of the surrounding air at the same time.” Also, plant greenery and manageable trees or shrubs close to the house; their graceful presence will add shade.

Kitchen

The busiest room in the house needs transforming from a sweatshop into a serene space. If you’re renovating, opt for an open-plan design if possible, with a central island; this allows air to circulate freely.

Richard Davonport, managing director at kitchen company Davonport, likes adding shutters to kitchen windows because they allow air to flow through and offer dappled light.

If you have a free-standing kitchen fan, don’t put it on the countertop, says Mike Norton, trade and projects director at Magnet Trade: “It may be tempting, so it blows air right at your face, but keep it on the floor. It will pull up cool air.”

Norton also suggests reframing how you cook and when you cook. “Stove tops, especially gas cooktops, emit a lot of heat. Minimise the use of oven and stove top, using smaller appliances that emit less heat.

“Integrated microwaves are massively popular now, and summer is the perfect time to make use of one. Toaster ovens, slow cookers, air fryers



Indoor plants can help to cool overheated living rooms
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and panini presses are also good.”

Adjust cooking times too. Prep meals early in the morning when it’s cool. You could even cook everything, then reheat in the microwave later as that won’t generate much heat, Norton says.

Conservatory

No wonder the conservatory is falling out of fashion. Too hot in summer, freezing in winter, just 77,000 were built in 2017 compared with about half a million in 2006 — a decline of 84 per cent, according to the House Buyer Bureau.

If you’re stuck with one, the best temporary fix are black-out blinds for all the glazing. However, a solid tiled roof (from around £19,000 for a standard size conservatory, according to trades comparison website Checkatrade) to replace at least some of the heat-prone glass or polycarbonate will improve matters.

“With a more practical roof, less energy will be required to cool and heat your home — a bonus for comfort and energy bills,” says Karamii Clarke,

senior building regulations designer at Resi.

Outdoor space

Watch out for scorching-hot paving stones, a danger to pets as well as humans. Copy the Mediterranean custom of “hosing down” outsides with water, to help keep ground and surrounding air cool. But don’t try it under a hosepipe ban. Save waste water from baths and household tasks instead.

Rowan Cripps, founding director of Infinite Paving, says extreme heat can actually crack paving stones.

“Portable air-conditioning units and outdoor fans are a great way to lower the temperature of the patio, or invest in a shadow sail.” (Mano Mano, from around £18.)

Cripps also suggests that as a permanent fix, you might replace paving with a more heat-resistant material; timber decking, outdoor rubber tiles and resin-bounded gravel are all possibles, but never artificial turf, unkind to the planet, and hot to the feet.

However, if you have a pond, this can come in useful in a heatwave. “Open the window or door closest to the water source, it will help to cool air drawn through your home,” says Stewart. “This is a cooling technique which has been used in hot countries such as Morocco for centuries; water features are installed in the centre of courtyards to cool the air.” ■

materials more resistant to heat damage, such as metal, ceramic or EPDM (ethylene propylene diene monomer, a synthetic rubber material) membrane or installing a roof-coating solution to protect shingles from UV rays.

Walls and materials

Some heatproofing steps are straightforward: ripping up heat-retaining thick wool or synthetic carpets in favour of tiled or wooden flooring, for example; or fitting blinds and curtains. Others, such as tracking the path of the sun and adjusting the purpose of rooms accordingly, are fairly simple to master.

However, for longer-term fixes, Oliver Burgess, architectural designer and studio manager at Resi, recommends serious insulation to keep out heat and cold including triple glazing, and if your home is suitable, timber cladding. “Adding timber cladding to masonry walls acts as an extra layer of insulation on the outside. It creates an air gap that stops heat from getting inside, keeping your home cooler,” he says.

Bedrooms

What should be a cool, comfortable sanctuary often turns into an unbearable sweat box. Obviously, heat rises, and most bedrooms — in houses at least — are first floor or above.

Keeping curtains and blinds closed during the day is



Blinds can provide welcome shade in a conservatory and protect from sun damage

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obvious, but you need to make sleeping more comfortable, says Deirdre Mc Gettrick, home expert and co-founder and CEO of Ufurnish. “Swap out your duvet to a lower-tog summer duvet. Anything between 2.5 and 7 tog will be perfect. Opt for down-filled pillows, more breathable than synthetics, or a pillow designed specifically for cooling, with cooling gel or ventilated memory foam. A cooling mattress topper made of gel-infused foam or latex is good too, to regulate temperature and keep you cool throughout the night.”

Mc Gettrick also suggests a trip to the kitchen to freeze sheets before whipping them out a few minutes before bedtime, and filling and freezing a hot-water bottle for a cooling ice block.

However, if your bedroom — or the nursery — really is impossible in the heat,

consider sleeping or napping in other rooms that are cooler. As Reading says, it’s definitely OK to do things differently

Nursery

Decorate a nursery in the lightest possible shades. “Neutrals, pastels and whites for an airy, peaceful feel,” says Reading, the author of *Stand Tall Like a Mountain: Mindfulness and Self-Care for Children and Parents* (Aster, £12.99). “Lighter shades reflect daylight and stay cooler unlike darker colours that absorb light and heat coming through windows.”

Keep those windows closed and blinds down when the nursery is not in use. Also, choose bedding in natural fibres, such as cotton, linen, silk or bamboo. These breathe well, Reading says, helping keep babies and children cool, and wicking away perspiration more effectively than synthetic

fabrics.

Home office

Finding the right location for a home office in a heatwave isn't easy.

Greig Millar, OVO Energy expert, suggests is a folding portable desk (such as Habitat's compact folding desk, at Argos, £40): "Space savvy, neat to pack away and perfect for moving around the house to work in the coolest space available, or even outside."

Or, if you can, decamp downstairs permanently. "Hot air rises and rooms upstairs — where many people have an office or study — can be as much as ten degrees hotter than ground-floor rooms," says Millar.

Remember to switch off to cool down. "Many home-office appliances emit heat just from being plugged in," Millar says. "If your profession requires multiple screens, use these during cooler times of the day. So many of us sit with the lights on in broad daylight and traditional light bulbs emit a lot of heat. Change to LEDs or turn off."

Bathroom

The urban myth — filling a bath with cold water will help to cool down the rest of your home — is just that, says Barrie Cutchie, design director at BC Designs, a bathroom company: "In reality, it wouldn't make a huge difference. If you are looking at how water can make a



Rethink how you cook — and when — in the summer months
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difference, freeze big blocks of ice in Tupperware, put them on a baking tray and stand a fan behind them. This can help cool down the room you are in, but you'll need to keep replacing the ice every hour or so."

However, the bathroom can play its part. Cutchie says extractor fans don't just pull moisture from the air: "While this is their primary function, they are also effective at removing heat. In the middle of a heatwave leaving your fan running can help to disperse the heat."

Hallway

Use the hallway as the starting point for your ground-floor heatproofing strategy. It leads directly into rooms with windows that can help keep the interior as cool as possible. Identify the most northerly facing or shaded windows first. These are key to cool air coming in.

"Opening windows on opposite walls or at opposite ends of the house will create a cross-breeze and allow airflow to move through," says Millar.

"If you open windows at night and early morning, then close through the day, you'll trap the cooler air in to let it circulate without escaping."

Another good tip, shared by architect Catrina Stewart at Office S&M, is to apply one-way mirror films to your windows to reflect sunlight (Amazon sell Zindoo at £7.99 a roll) or Dichroic solar film (from £1.25 at Abode Window Films). "This can create incredible colour-changing light effects inside while also reflecting sunlight and reducing solar gain."

Living room

The trend for open-plan living might help airflow and circulation, but if it's accompanied by bi-fold doors, and their cousin the skylight, you've got a pressure cooker.

Large bi-fold doors can be impractical because they allow too much solar gain and can be difficult to shade. A basic set of roller blinds — carefully split so it's easy to open at least one part of the door — will do the job. Or pull a curtain across when shading is required — possibly sprayed with water?

Skylights demand careful placement to maximise airflow but minimise heat gain from direct sunlight, says Burgess: "They need adjustable blinds or shades to control the amount of light and heat entering the space."

Indoor plants can help to cool over-heated living rooms. "When it gets hot, plants let

