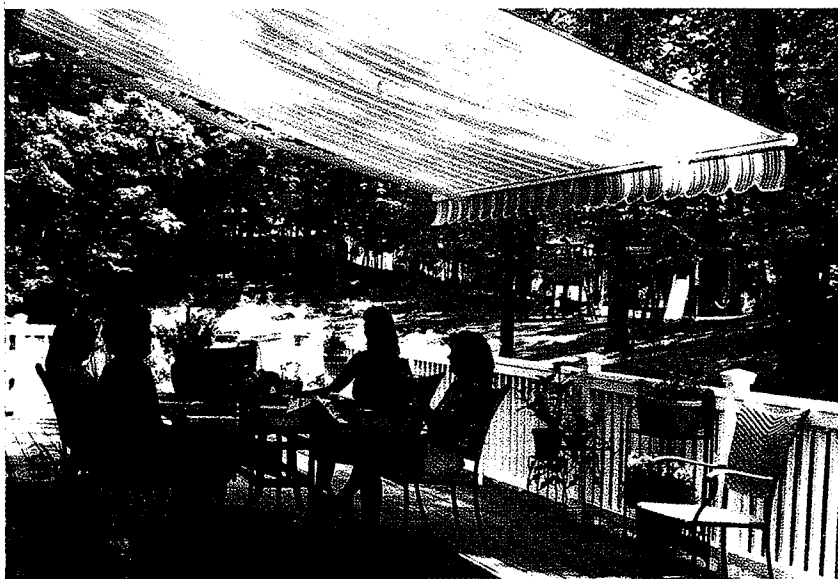


On a roll

From full sun to complete shade, retractable awnings offer the best of both worlds

By Gord Delamont Special to CANADIAN RENOVATOR



ASK ANY REALTOR WHAT TURNS A HOME into a hot property, and a deck or a patio is almost always close to the top of the list. And no wonder. A deck or patio is a wonderful haven for relaxing far away from all the stresses of modern living. And who can resist the call of the barbeque and festive outdoor entertaining when the weather gets warm?

For the renovator, a deck or patio job is also one of the most fulfilling contracts. After all, having a new outdoor space to enjoy can be one of the most satisfying parts of being a homeowner. Unfortunately, due to uncooperative weather that can be too hot or too wet, that satisfaction isn't always guaranteed—unless the investment is protected with a retractable awning.

“A quality retractable awning is one of the best investments a homeowner can make for outdoor comfort and value,” says Jake Korol, president of Rolltec Rolling Systems Ltd., a Concord, Ontario-based manufacturer of retractable awnings. “A

retractable awning extends and enlarges the living area and its usefulness. With a roof above a deck or patio, it becomes another room. And because the fabrics are so good and colourful, homeowners enjoy a holiday feeling every time they roll out the awning. It's like being in the Caribbean."

"At one time a retractable awning was looked at as a luxury item, now it's becoming a part of a house that many people wouldn't do without and lots more are just discovering."



With a retractable awning, homeowners also gain the flexibility to enjoy their deck or patio on their terms. When the sun gets too hot or a passing shower threatens, they simply extend their awning for near-instant protection for themselves, their guests and their furniture. When they want to enjoy the sunshine, they simply roll the awning back up for inconspicuous storage against the house. In addition, retractable awnings can help keep indoor temperatures lower as well, helping to reduce costly air-conditioning bills. Less direct sun can also help prevent carpets and furniture from fading.

"UV (ultra-violet) protection is such a big issue now," adds Korol. "Twenty years ago it wasn't an issue. Now everybody is looking for protection from the sun—and an awning is the best way to bring that protection to an outdoor space."

With all the advantages of a retractable awning, you'd think that everyone would have one. But as Korol notes, lingering misconceptions about affordability and ease of operation, combined with a big push to more comfort-oriented outdoor spaces, mean the retractable awning market is only now poised for substantial growth.

"At one time a retractable awning was looked at as a luxury item," says Korol. "Now it's becoming a part of a house that many people wouldn't do without and lots more are just discovering. Because there's been a trend to bigger and better outdoor living areas, more people have become interested in awnings and they're discovering how affordable and convenient they are. So the market opportunities for renovators are excellent, both as an add-on product or as a dealer."

Today's retractable awnings come in two basic types: manually-operated models, which are opened by hand, and motorized models, which operate by

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