

An awning added to the house at left provides a sheltered recreation area for the residents. In addition to shading the outdoors, it can help keep the interior cool by blocking the sun and summertime heat.

# Awnings can help cool home

**A**wnings are sometimes viewed as outmoded decorations from another era, but they can be effective and energy-efficient devices for keeping homes cool.

Properly installed, awnings can greatly reduce the heat from the sun that enters a building through windows. Awning experts such as Charles Dewey of American Fidelity, an awning manufacturer and installer in Northeast Philadelphia, say it is most important to have awnings on the south and east sides of a building.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, awnings can reduce heat gain through south-facing windows by up to 65 percent, and through east-facing windows by up to 77 percent. Studies compiled by the National Bureau of Standards say this translates into temperature reduction in awning-equipped rooms by eight to 15 degrees and a savings in air-conditioning costs of up to 25 percent.

An awning also can effectively shade a window air conditioner, which will work more efficiently if shielded from sunlight.

Awnings help cool more effectively than window blinds or drapes because they block heat before it enters the building. The reduction of sunlight by awnings also helps protect carpets and interior fabrics from fading.

Modern awnings are made from a

variety of materials, including acrylic, vinyl, aluminum, fiberglass and traditional canvas.

Canvas awnings, which often have color patterns painted on the outside surface, are generally the least expensive but often have the shortest life. Painted colors sometimes fade after a few years.

Acrylic awnings, which have color on both sides and are resistant to fading, are increasingly popular, according to Dewey.

The price of an awning and installation for a typical 32-inch window can range from \$130 to \$400, depending on the material and design, Dewey said.

Awnings are made in two basic types — simple panels without sides that permit free flow of air under the awnings, and hood styles with sides that provide an all-around shield at the top of the window. Hood-type awnings sometimes have a vent at the

top to allow warm air to escape.

Retractable or easily removable awnings are most practical since, in cold weather, solar heat gain through windows can be beneficial. Retractable awnings generally have folding side arms that let the awning material roll or fold up over the top of the window.

Most awnings are custom made to fit specific windows. Many dealers give free cost estimates.

Homeowners who want to install their own awnings can work directly with some manufacturers. "We will make them for do-it-yourselfers,"

said Dewey.

**Sears is out** of the mail-order business as far as its big-book catalogue is concerned, but fortunately for do-it-yourselfers, it is continuing its Power & Hand Tools catalogue. Copies of the 1993-94 catalogue were received recently by previous tool-catalogue customers.

The catalogue, which has a close-up of a \$75 portable circular saw on the cover, has 132 pages and is an invaluable aid to anyone who uses tools. Sears Craftsman tools are featured, of course.

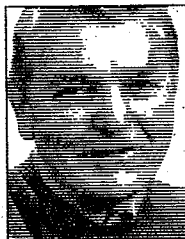
Do-it-yourselfers who aren't on the catalogue mailing list can get a free copy by calling 800-377-7414.

**A new building panel** with many possibilities for do-it-yourselfers is Georgia-Pacific's Ply-Bead. A plywood panel with plies of Southern yellow pine, Ply-Bead has a surface that resembles tongue-and-groove planking with beaded or rounded joints between planks. The four-by-eight-foot panels are sold in 11/32-inch and 19/32-inch thicknesses. Panels can be used indoors or outdoors and have a rough-sanded surface that can be painted or stained for such uses as exterior siding, porch ceilings and wainscoting.

## For More Information

Write Georgia-Pacific, Dept. Ply-Bead, Box 1763, Norcross, Ga. 30091 or call 800-284-5347.

Readers' questions and comments should be sent to Gene Austin, The Inquirer, Box 8263, Philadelphia 19101.



**Gene Austin**  
*Do It*