



# Sally's Realty Post



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## 5 ways to reduce air conditioning bills



(NC)—While many of us long for the hot days of summer, we don't look forward to the high electricity bill that comes with increased use of air conditioning. Here are a few things you can do to keep those air conditioning costs under control:

1. Keep your blinds closed and the heat out. Using window blinds or shades can block up to 65% of the heat that would otherwise come in through your windows. To keep your house even cooler, Sears tells us to install insulating window coverings such as the cellular shades. These shades are stylish and practical—reducing heat gain from your windows by up to 85%. More details are available online at [www.searshomeservices.ca](http://www.searshomeservices.ca) under the custom décor tab.
2. Running a ceiling fan will help keep your rooms cool so that you can turn your air conditioning down or off. Install an Energy Star qualified ceiling fan in the higher traffic rooms in your house, such as your bedroom.
3. A programmable thermostat will deliver savings without sacrificing comfort. Regulate your home's temperature by setting the thermostat

a few degrees warmer while you are at work, then setting it to cool down before the family arrives home.

4. An old window air conditioner uses up to 66% more energy than a new Energy Star qualified unit. Clean or replace your window air conditioner filter monthly to keep it running efficiently.
5. If your central air conditioning unit is more than 12 years old, replacing it with an Energy Star qualified model could cut cooling costs by 30%. Heating and cooling specialists can also be arranged by Sears to help you decide on the model that best suits your home.

## Enlarge the look of your garden by painting with blue



(NC)—What is most commonly stated as a 'favourite colour' yet the one we paint with the least? Colour expert Janice Lindsay, owner of PINK colour + design, says it is cobalt blue; the blue of Lapis Lazuli, for centuries considered the most precious and divine of hues.

And now, this cool mystic blue is the hot colour for small gardens.

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“Blue is the colour of sky and sea—a recessive colour that makes things look further away. It will create the feeling of 'space,’” explains Lindsay. This quality makes it a good choice for the fence around a small garden. “It looks airy and creates a sense of openness.” Lindsay also likes to use it on sheds, because this colour of air and water dissolves the solidity of structure, softens edges, and is gentle on the psyche.

“Being analogous to nature's greens, blue blends in, makes friends, and relaxes the palette,” says Lindsay. She recommends deep blues, like PPG Pittsburgh Paints Daring Indigo (347-7), because they take up less visual space than red or white and bring a sense of mystery to the garden. She also likes bright blue because it is a bit quirky—an element of fun that lightens the mood. “The appearance of cobalt blue in the garden (like Bright Cerulean, 247-7) is surprising and a bit surreal. The effect is enhanced by vibrant plantings in magenta and yellow-green.”

Lindsay shuns yellow with this celestial hue (too French Country), and feels that orange—its complement—interrupts its aura. Like all blues, she says, it looks good with white but this season, prefers unbleached linen as its neutral companion.

Many ancient cultures believed that bold blue on a gate kept evil from entering the garden. Do it too this summer and create an atmosphere that is both inviting and intriguing for your guests.

## Grill Like A Pro

(NC)—Whether it's a Hibachi or fully-loaded built-in barbeque, Canadian grilling styles are a plenty. Finding the perfect fit for your lifestyle and space is easy if you know what you need. The experts at The Home Depot Canada offer the following check list to finding the right grill for you.



1. Don't buy more BBQ than you need—take a realistic look at your budget and see what options are available.
2. Look for the features you'll use—Is your barbeque going to be strictly used for burgers or do you need a rotisserie, broil function and side burner?
3. Choose a grill size to meet your serving needs—Do all your neighbours look forward to your monthly outdoor parties or do you generally host smaller intimate dinners?
4. How hot do you need it? If you are cooking for small groups of friends or family a standard-sized barbecue with two conventional burners and 25,000 BTUs (British Thermal Units) should serve your needs. However, if you are a grilling pro and want all the bells and whistles on the barbeque, a machine that can generate as much as 60,000 BTUs will give you the heat that you are looking for.
5. Gas, propane, charcoal? Consider the options (gas fittings and hook ups) and price points.

For more information and to find the perfect grill for your lifestyle visit [www.homedepot.ca/bbqselector](http://www.homedepot.ca/bbqselector)

## Low mortgage rates are attracting young buyers

(NC)—According to recent RBC Royal Bank research, 67 per cent of Canadians between the ages of 18-34 are looking to purchase their first home within the next two years.

“Buying your first home is one of the biggest life decisions you will ever make and you want to be both financially and emotionally prepared,” said Melissa Jarman, director of client strategies for RBC. “While you may qualify for a maximum mortgage amount, you should also consider how it will impact your lifestyle and other factors that are important to you.”



- Know how much you can afford—Review down payment options, household income, current debt, estimated monthly housing-related costs and closing costs. An online calculator can help determine how much you can afford at [www.royalbank.com/mortgageaffordability](http://www.royalbank.com/mortgageaffordability)
- Work with a budget—budgeting tools such as myFinanceTracker ([www.rbcroyalbank.com/myfinancetracker](http://www.rbcroyalbank.com/myfinancetracker)) can help determine exactly where your money is going and how much you have to spend within the parameters you've set for yourself.
- Do your research—Consider reaching out to an RBC mortgage specialist who can give you insights into your finances. This link may be helpful: <https://mortgage.rbc.com>.

Further advice and tips can be found at: [www.rbcadvicecentre.com](http://www.rbcadvicecentre.com), or join the discussion on purchasing your first home at Facebook.com/rbcroyalbank.

## Have more colour fun on the front of your home



(NC)—It is hard to let loose and have fun with colour on the front of our homes. We usually feel the need to restrict our whims to the front door—and what goes into the planters. But according to colour and design experts, there are a few more places for colour fun that won't upset the neighbours. Consider these ideas:

**Step Risers.** If you are using more than one colour on your exterior trim, alternate these on step risers. It will be playful but still well-behaved.

**Porch Ceiling.** Colour here has a big impact without rocking the boat. Navajo Red, from the Olympic line of solid-colour stains, is a terra cotta that works well with red brick or stone. A soft, mid-tone, almost-neutral green will complement yellow and red brick, as well as neutral exteriors. White is often used on porch ceilings to maximize reflected light but all light colours can do the same job and some—like Gold Buff (PPG Pittsburgh Paints, 215-4)—will do it better.

Blue is popular on porch ceilings in places like New Orleans. Blues brighten and lighten, creating a sense of sky, and they work with almost any

colour scheme. Try Shipmate Blue, another Olympic solid colour stain, but you can choose any blue that blends into the larger palette of your exterior. Janice Lindsay, owner of PINK colour + design, encourages clients to push the envelope. “I like Olympic Wedgwood, a demure historical blue. It seems a bit cheeky—but only because it's unexpected.”

**Porch Floor.** Turn porch floorboards into a welcome mat by staining boards in alternating bands of colour. The rhythm can vary—single boards in your accent colour between two boards stained in your main colour; or two and two, etc. Just limit yourself to two or three hues chosen from your exterior palette and blend rather than contrast. Subtler palettes will be more elegant. Also from the Olympic stain palette, Lindsay recommends Sage and Seafoam with or without Woodland Green or Colonial Blue; or Beachwood and Aqua Smoke, with or without Antique Silver. “Stripe the entire porch, or just the sitting area,” she suggests.

**Furniture.** Staining wood furniture creates a focal point. Complement your plantings. For example, use Olympic Amsterdam Blue on chairs that sit next to magenta geraniums or chartreuse plants; or try Olympic Harvest Gold with any red.

These suggestions work equally well in exterior paint or solid-colour stain, but consider the difference in finish before making your choice of coating. For example, Olympic Maximum solid-colour stain will coat your wood with a flat sheen and let its texture show through. PPG's floor and porch enamel, in satin or semi-gloss, will give you a higher sheen and smooth surface.

Now if this isn't enough fun with colour for you, don't worry. There are still all kinds of opportunities waiting for you in a place where you can pull out all the colour stops—out back.

## How to be water wise this summer



(NC)—Water is a precious resource, and we are told that during the summer months municipal water use doubles. By taking action at home you can waste less water, cause less stress on the treatment and distribution system and save money.

Much of the heavy water use during summer comes from the increase in outdoor activities. Here are some tips to begin using outdoor water wisely:

- Less is more when it comes to watering your lawn—two or three centimeters once a week is plenty. For best results, water early in the morning before 9, to avoid evaporation.
- Consider using native plants in the garden; they require less water and are more resistant to local plant diseases.
- Collect rainwater from your roof and use this water for your lawn or garden. Garden specialists tell us that rain water is actually better for plants because it does not contain chlorine. A wide selection of rain barrels and sprinklers can be found at [www.sears.ca](http://www.sears.ca).

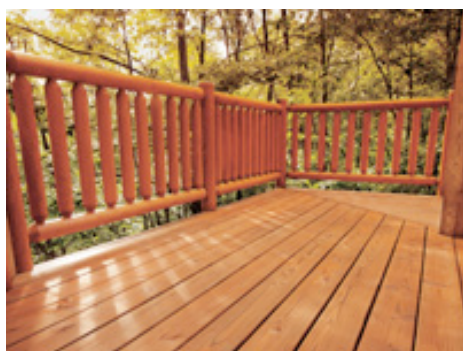
There are also a number of actions you can take inside your home to save water:

- By replacing an old showerhead with a new low-flow model, you could save up to 10 litres per minute.
- If you have a toilet that is over 15 years old, it's possible that it's using

over 13 litres of water each time you flush. In contrast, low-flow toilets use only 6 litres on each flush.

- A new Kenmore Energy Star qualified front-load clothes washer will use up to 65% less water than a 15 year old top load model.
- If you have a dishwasher that was manufactured before 1994, upgrading to a new Kenmore Energy Star qualified dishwasher can save you up to 4,920 litres of water over the lifetime of the appliance.

## How to stain your deck for the best results



(NC)—A porch is a very public space that creates a first impression of your home. In contrast, your deck is a private place—an extension of your home outdoors, built for relaxation. Did you know that keeping them both in good shape and looking their best is a lot easier today than it used to be? In fact, you can do everything you need to in one rain-free weekend, say the experts.

The first step is to thoroughly inspect your wood. Look for mildew. If you have it, remove it with a product designed specifically for the job. If you are lucky enough not to face mould and mildew, you should still clean your wood with deck cleaner before staining.

According to Rob Pogue, the senior development associate for Olympic exterior stain, the difference between the finished appearance of porches and decks that are cleaned prior to staining—and those that are not—is significant. “The cleaning step is well-

worth the relatively small incremental investment of time and money. It will give you a much better-looking and longer-lasting finish,” he says and also points out that the website olympic.com offers a short, 7-minute video explaining how to clean and stain your deck or porch in two easy steps.

So what type of stain is best to use?

Pogue makes these suggestions: “Remember that clear sealants, toners and semi-transparent stains are actually absorbed into the wood. If your porch or deck was built with high-grade woods such as cedar or redwood, using a clear sealant or toner will seal and protect it but the high-quality grain you paid extra for will still be the star of the show.” On the other hand, a semi-transparent stain will apply more colour pigment and hide more of the grain. “It’s a better choice for standard-grade woods that may have more blemishes and imperfections.”

Lastly, a solid-colour stain sits on the surface of your wood in the same way that paint does. “Solid stains are a better choice if you want only the texture of the wood to show through,” says Pogue. He suggests solid colour for siding shakes and for older decks that are past their prime.

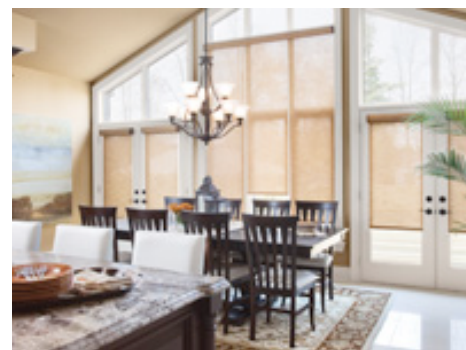
Deck builders advise their clients to invest in the highest-quality stain they can afford. Premium brands come with longer warranties than lower-priced stains, so they look attractive when applied and will hold up better than lower-priced stains over time.

## Roller shades play a big role in window treatments

(NC)—Windows need shades the way people need clothes—and for many of the same reasons. Shades, like clothes, are for privacy, for protection and for warmth—and hopefully they will create a splash of style that attracts the right kind of attention.

Of all the many types of shades found in Canadian homes, perhaps the

simplest is the roller shade. It could be seen as the equivalent of the little black cocktail dress, but is even more versatile. Recently, Mary Dobson, the spokesperson for Levolor Window Fashions in Canada and a frequent guest on Citytv’s CityLine, called attention to a home where roller shades were used to stunning effect, especially in the kitchen.



“This kitchen is an entertainer’s dream,” she said. “It has high ceilings, high windows and a huge impact. There’s a view out to the backyard with a large pool and through to the family room. I helped the homeowners choose high style Roman Shades for that room, but suggested a cleaner, pared down option for the window wall of the kitchen. Roller shades were the perfect choice. They offered function and style all in one sleek clean package. Even better, they could be made in the same fabric, as the Roman shades, used in the family room for a truly custom co-ordinated approach.”

Every window needs to balance function and style to be truly successful. On the function side of the equation, roller shades offer perfect light control, with fabrics ranging from light filtering to room darkening all the way to blackout and solar screens reduce glare and heat. The company’s Perceptions line includes a sheer panel, so they can filter strong sunlight.

On the style side, roller shades share a wide range of fabrics with other types of blinds, making it easier to co-ordinate colours, textures and patterns throughout the house.

More information is available online at