

Window Shopping

I like to compare shopping for windows to shopping for cars. Why? Well, for these reasons; 1. The process can be overwhelming, 2. They are both expensive, and 3. You get what you pay for. If you have ever shopped for windows, you know that there are as many windows on the market as there are cars. The question is, which window is right for you? Do you want a Honda, a window that is well priced and a good performer or do you want the Mercedes? Of course you can also buy the entry level window, but like the entry level car, it will only last a few years.

There are four basic types of windows on the market. The first is an all wood window, with the wood exposed on the outside and the inside. Many homeowners opt against the exposed wood on the exterior simply because of the maintenance involved. The second is an all wood window with the exterior clad in aluminum. The aluminum is coated with an extremely durable finish which will never have to be painted. Marvin Windows makes a really nice aluminum clad window. The third window is an all wood window with the exterior clad in vinyl. These windows are also very durable and usually come in a variety of colors. The Anderson 400 Series is a good example of this type of window. The fourth type of window is the all Vinyl window. These windows can perform well but you give up the look and the warmth of a wood window on the interior.

When I say windows are like cars, that goes for performance as well as appearance. The performance of a window is important both in the summer and in the winter. For example: for a typical 2,000 square foot house in Northern Kentucky changing from a single pain wood window to a double glazed, vinyl clad wood window could result in a 25% reduction in heating cost.

Just like the stickers on cars, windows have a sticker with their performance rating. It is important to look at this when selecting a window. The sticker is broken into four quadrants. The top two spaces are filled with the U-value and the Solar Heat Gain Coefficient (SHGC). The lower two spaces are additional performance ratings. The lower the U-value, the better the window. A new triple pain high performance window might have a U-value as low as 0.15 while an old single pain window will have a U-value of 1.20. The SHGC ranges between 0.0-1.0. Windows with a higher SHGS allow solar heat gain during the winter, while windows with a lower SHGS are effective at blocking heat during the summer. We live in a mixed climate so a window with a SHGS ranging from 0.4-0.5 is acceptable.

Another great sticker to look for is the Energy Star sticker. Did you know that you can take a 10% tax break up to \$200 for purchasing Energy Star qualified windows. Not only will you save on your energy bills but also on your taxes. And, why spend the money on windows if you don't get a good performer? My suggestion, buy the window that performs like the Honda. Find the well priced window that looks good and has really good performance ratings.

*Some of the information in this article was borrowed from the www.efficientwindows.org website. Please go to this website to learn more about windows.