

Circulation: 65,000

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**HANDS
ON**



THE TRUTH ABOUT CONSERVATORIES

A conservatory can be one of the cheaper routes to more sun-filled space, but most of us are put off getting one by the many myths that surround them. Read this guide, and there'll be no excuse not to have one.

Words by: Field. Main Image: Aptopos. www.aptopos-conservatories.com

Most homes need more space and light, and a conservatory will deliver both. It can also give you a 5% increase in the value of your home for half the price of a similar-sized extension. "You can totally transform a home

by adding a decent conservatory," says Ben Norton from Fitzjohn Ingle estate agents. "The increase in space alone when a room-sized conservatory is built onto a three-bed semi, for example, makes a major improvement on the useable living space. It is

attractive to home owners and buyers alike."

Planning and building regulations approval isn't always needed for a conservatory, either, so is it any surprise that it's the most popular home improvement in the UK? There are still the dissenters who will

trot out the same old excuses for not building a conservatory or avoiding a house that has one fitted already, even though there are some rather good reasons why a conservatory actually does make real sense. So what's your excuse? →

HANDS ON

“Conservatories get damp and smelly and are filled with condensation”

Condensation is caused when warm, moist air meets a cooler surface or cooler air. The warm, moist air in a house is created by everyday things like breathing, washing clothes and cooking – that’s up to 10l a day for a house with five people.

Condensation can form on any hard surface, but it’s easiest to see when it appears on glass – hence the myth that conservatories themselves are damp-filled, condensation manufacturing plants.

The underlying problem with a conservatory that’s always dripping with condensation is a lack of adequate ventilation throughout the entire house. Try to use the extractor fan whenever you are cooking, open windows and install a high power fan in any room with a shower inside.

It may well also be worth looking at whole house ventilation systems. Companies like CVC Direct (www.CVCdirect.co.uk) offer models that come with inconspicuous vents for rooms which are silent when they are in use. These cost from under £300 for a system for a small house and around £700 for a large home.



DO'S AND DON'TS
Look at existing living space which is under-utilised and whether a conservatory could make it more usable.

Whole house ventilation is the key to a condensation-free conservatory.



Existing conservatory designs can be altered to your specifications.

“I want to be individual”

“The bespoke conservatory option is available to everyone,” says John Symonds of Dial a Conservatory (0800 833 309), “you can personalise an existing design or go for a complete made-to-measure package of your own design in wood, metal or PVC.”

Many of the major conservatory suppliers, such as Oak Leaf Conservatories of York (www.oakleafconservatories.co.uk) can create a bespoke conservatory for you – just ask the question, but make sure you have a clear idea of what you want to build, a few sketches can help and an idea of size. Alternatively, you could approach a local specialist carpentry firm and get them to whittle you up a stunning conservatory in the exotic wood of your choice. Beware, though, going bespoke will add at least 50% to the price Mrs Average will be shelling out for her conservatory. →



Opt for a contemporary-style build with geometric shapes.

“Aren't conservatories an 80s throwback and just a bit naff?”

Lis Chapelhow from the Glass and Glazing Federation neatly sums up the feelings of the whole conservatory industry when she says that she 'totally disagrees' with this statement. She's got a point. Conservatories have moved on immeasurably from the time when white uPVC carbuncles were seemingly being stitched on the back of every type of house. Go to any conservatory manufacturer today and you'll be met with a bewildering display of traditional and modern designs. As if to prove the point, that icon of Eighties-ness, Madonna, has just had a frameless Pilkington Planar conservatory installed. From a conservatory point of view, at least, that now makes her the fresh queen of contemporary.

Whatever conservatory you decide to build, just make sure it ties in well with your property now and is capable of ageing gracefully with it. Using styling cues from your house and transferring them to the conservatory is one of the best ways to link the two buildings. The colour of brick on dwarf walls and the shapes cut into leadwork between the house and the conservatory will instantly bring the two together. Ignoring details like this can have the opposite effect. Before you build, take a look at any conservatories attached to houses like yours. Make a note of the things that work and plagiarise.

“I live in a terrace with small garden at the rear, it won't fit in, will it?”

Lean-to conservatories are readily available as small as 2.4x2.4m for around £1,300 (supply only). If that's too big you can always go the bespoke route (see excuse number 8). You may ask what the point is in adding just a few square metres to your house, Leslie George from Marchwood Conservatory Maintenance has seen the light. "Quite often the smallest conservatories can have a huge impact on a small living space, and the extra light can make the rooms seem bigger."



An addition of even a metre can make all the difference.

Contacts & Information

Apropos www.apropos-conservatories.com **Oak Leaf Conservatories of York** www.oakleafconservatories.co.uk
Ultraframe www.ultraframe-conservatories.co.uk **Arc Systems Ltd** www.arc-ltd.co.uk **Trade Conservatories 2 U** 0845 130 3871 **Marchwood Conservatory Maintenance** www.marchwood.com **The Glass Centre/County Windows** www.county-windows.com **Andy Whitelaw Joinery** www.andywhitelawjoinery.co.uk **Pilkington** www.pilkington.com **The Window Film Company** 01494 794 477 **Sky Vent** 01902 450 816 **CVC Direct** www.CVCdirect.co.uk
Glass & Glazing Federation 0870 424 255 **Dial a Conservatory** 0800 833 309 **Richmond Oak Ltd** 01908 511 434 **Franklin** 0113 250 2991 **Thomas Sanderson Blinds** 0800 220 603