



# sunroom additions

## 10 things to consider

So you have a wonderful home but you want more room? You have a wonderful view but can only sit out and watch it in the summer? Or, are you dreaming about that wonderful room in the garden you have always wanted?

Conservatory, sunroom, garden room, sun lounge, whatever you prefer to call it, there is something enduringly relaxing about sitting in a room made with glass and enjoying the warmth from the sun. For this article let's call it a conservatory.

A new conservatory can also free up an existing room in the house so that in turn can be turned into another bedroom, office, dining room, etc.

Many times customers decide against a conservatory because it sounds so daunting, or they have heard of horror stories from others who have had a bad experience; but it really can be a wonderful addition to your home if it is managed right.

1) First, (and this can be the most costly both initially and in the long run) as I am sure you have heard before, carefully pick a contractor you feel absolutely comfortable with. With the new licensing in PA, all contractors have to be registered with the Attorney General. My advice--ask to see the contractor's registration info and ONLY work with the ones who are registered. Remember, if they are sub-contractors to the company, they will be registered separately. Only employees are covered under the company's registration.

2) Do not deal with companies that do *guesstimates*. When creating your conservatory there are so many variables that need to be taken into account, such as size, style, survey results, positioning and planning permissions, that it would be impossible to quote you accurately without visiting your home.

So because your needs and the specifications of your home are unique, your

price will be too. Many conservatory manufacturers quote approximate prices which can change drastically further down the line. Work with a company who prefers to fully understand your requirements and the proposed site before quoting a price. That way they can give you a considered quote so you are sure of the conservatory you want and the value of the price you're paying is clear.

Before you can begin to get exact pricing, you need to really sit down and think what you hope to gain from this room. This decision will help you justify your expenses. What is the point of spending thousands of dollars on a room you only want to use at Christmas?

3) Not all sunrooms require expensive, involved, detailed drawings. If you have an existing screened in room and you are only adding windows, or if you have a deck or concrete pad there, and an

existing roof, you can have it enclosed with windows—you don't need full detailed drawings.

4) Work with your local municipality and building inspector. Many times customers think they are not on the customer's side...but they are! They are looking out for you in the long term. Contractors who freely work with the inspectors know the basic rules and don't hide anything. We have found in the past that people who don't work with, or do not inform the inspectors of their projects usually have a neighbor who is only too ready to make the municipality aware of the work that is going on. Then you can have some major



BEFORE

problems. Inspectors can put a halt to the job until it is brought up to code or indeed have things taken down to do inspections...a cost that can double a project if not caught until the last minute!

5) Work with a design that will fit right in with your home's architecture.



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When you first walk in, it needs to feel it belonged there. It needs to feel right. A good sunroom will look like it's always been there when it's finished. Each one of our conservatory designs is tailor-made to be the perfect addition to your home—adding both space and value.

6) A conservatory can be a year-round room with heating and air conditioning, and the temperature should be the same as your home. Not just a summer house, it should be a room for all seasons.

Take care to invest wisely on windows because they will probably cover a major area and it won't matter what type of insulation you put in the knee wall or ceiling, the cold and excessive heat will make the room unbearable. Keeping this room hot is usually not a problem. Keeping it cool in summer is. Use a window that has a similar U-Factor as a solid wall but obviously something you can see through. The "Starmark" window is excellent for this application.

As far as window designs go, it depends on the designs you like. Casements and sliding windows will give you more glass area than double hung's.

The position of French/sliding, or patio doors is dependent upon the design of the conservatory. Doors positioned to the front of the conservatory work very well especially when fully open on a sunny day when the lawn has just been cut. However, you may wish to consider doors to the side of the conservatory allowing furniture to be placed around the front of the conservatory, therefore giving access to the side path or patio... the choice is yours.

7) The cost of all conservatories will be dependent upon size, design and material. What type of conservatory? Whatever you choose, purchase the best quality that you can afford as it will serve you well over the years that you own it. In other words, you pay for what you get.

8) When you have decided on your contractor and the project begins, stay involved with the project. The secret to a good conservatory is to enjoy the production of it. The initial stage will be the biggest challenge especially if you're starting from scratch, and/or the weather is uncooperative. Keep positive...it will all come together.

9) There are lots of ways to keep the costs down, and there are lots of things that will keep the INITIAL costs

down—two totally different things.

Be careful about the building products you use. Don't put in low-grade windows. Initially the cost will be low but you will waste money on fuel bills in the long run. Have electric wired during the project as opposed to after. Remember any outside lights and receptacles; bringing electricians in at this stage is so much more cost efficient. If you want to keep costs down, have the wiring run and pick less expensive fixtures for now. Or do your own trim work and painting.



10) Inform your contractor of any changes you want to make as soon as you decide. Waiting could cost you more money. Keep track of any changes and ask for a change or addition order, especially if there will be a charge or refund involved. This will keep both you and your contractor on track and will eliminate any surprises at completion.

In conclusion, whether you're looking to increase your living space or wanting to enjoy your gorgeous garden view all year round, let us help you pick the perfect conservatory.

R&A



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