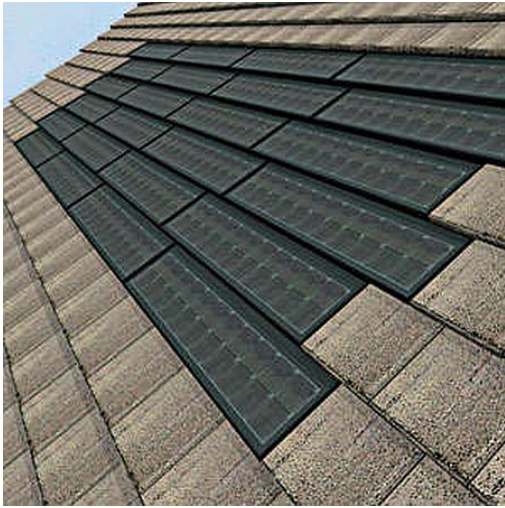


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HOUSE WISE

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*Solar Ain't Lookin So
Bad!*

Cool Roofs

By Elizabeth Guinn

With things really beginning to heat up around here, everyone is looking for ways to cool things down inside their homes. If you happen to be fortunate enough to have some very large shade trees conveniently placed around your house, you have it made right now. But for the rest of us, how do we lower the amount of heat that transmits mainly through our roofs and into our homes.

For the majority of people, a portion of your air conditioning system resides in your attic along with probably all of its ductwork. Attics are convenient places to place HVAC units because it's a lot of unused space where the contractor can run ductwork with a minimum of obstructions. However, the attic is the worst place to place an HVAC unit simply because the temperatures in our attics can be sometimes 40 degrees hotter than the conditioned air within your house.

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Dan's Desk

By Dan Guinn

Yes, that is a picture of me enjoying my new hammock that I got for Father's Day. Even though I have been hinting that tools would make a great Father's Day gift, my family decided I needed a little R and R. I must admit, this thing is pretty comfortable.

However, while I am lounging here enjoying the breezes and the birds singing, the yard work is not getting done! I did a little research while swinging in my hammock and came up with the perfect solution and yes, it is an energy saving solution!

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The main reason it gets so hot in our attics is the fact that most roof shingles are a fairly dark color and they sit in full sun most of the day absorbing all that free summer radiation. They transmit that heat right through your roof framing and into your attic. Even if your attic is vented properly, it still retains a majority of the heat that is radiated into it.

There are lots of ways to try and combat this problem with varying degrees of success and varying costs as well. One way to combat the heat issue is to never heat your shingles up in the first place. Shade would be great to prevent this problem, but if you don't have shade available maybe a reflective roofing material would be the ticket.

Don't start picturing your house's roof covered with giant reflective mirrors that require you to wear a welder's mask just to drive into your driveway. Reflective roofs reflect the sun's heat rays, which doesn't necessarily mean it is reflecting the light waves. This type of roof, because of its shape, allows for ventilation between the roof shingle and the roof deck, which is another huge benefit.

Eagle Roofing has come out with an interesting line of roofing tiles. These are not your standard shingles, they are concrete tiles that simulate clay tiles. The Cool Roof line has a coating that allows the tiles to reflect a majority of the heat that the sun rains down on your house resulting in up to a 30% reduction in your cooling bill. These tiles are a little heavier than your standard shingles. Before considering using them, contact your favorite building professional and discuss whether your existing roof can handle the additional weight. If you are considering using something like this on a new roof, check out the specs at www.eagleroofting.com and adjust your design to compensate.

I love their reflective properties not to mention that I love the look of a tile roof. As much as I love their tiles, I have to admit that they have another roofing product that I love even more. They also have a line of shingles called the Solar Save shingle. These are a lower profile shingle that would blend in more with either a traditional flat asphalt shingle or even with a cedar type shingle.

With these shingles, no shade is a plus! Each shingle is a mini solar panel sucking up all that sun and producing electricity for your home. How much energy a roof solar system will produce is a formula with so many variables that it would be impossible to articulate it here. Things like location, orientation, size and pitch of roof all combine to determine just how much energy your individual solar roof could produce.

I have included a link to the technical specs at http://www.eagleroofting.com/main/pdf/new_products/Eagle_Solar_Roof_Brochure.pdf

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Contact Elizabeth and Dan Guinn at info@danguinnhomes.com for the free report, "Top Ten Best Ideas to Reduce Utility Bills and Spend the Savings on What You Really Want!" Just send me an email requesting a copy and I will speed one out to you!



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Husqvarna has come out with a new electric lawnmower called the Automower. This is not just any lawnmower, this one is rechargeable. If you have seen the small robotic vacuum cleaner for your house, this is it's close cousin. It has a docking station where it plugs itself into the power grid and charges up its rechargeable batteries. Then when you have programmed it to cut the grass, it detaches from the docking station and whirs around trimming your yard to the desired height while mulching the clippings providing free fertilizer.

But that's not all. To extend the life of this little mower, they added solar panels all over the top of the thing. So while it is clipping, it is downloading it's own power for free. The best part is that it can cut up to $\frac{3}{4}$ of an acre on one charge and while it is cutting, it is only using the power equivalent of standard light bulb.

Unlike the little household vacuums, these things don't find their way around by bumping into things, sensing the obstacle and changing course. That could be disasterous. Instead, you bury a small a small boundary cable just under the surface and then use the same boundary cable to keep it out of flower beds.

Apparently these things have been around for awhile, they are just making their debut in the USA. The Husqvarna website states that they have over 50,000 users of these robotic mowers around the world and have been making robotic mowers since 1995. That tells me that I'm not the poor soul who has to work the bugs out of it.

The people at Husqvarna figure that these little guys can save you as much as 40 hours of work in a given year. That means by purchasing one, you can give yourself the equivalent of an additional week of vacation time. I located a dealer in the Richmond area who said the largest ones were selling for \$2899. A little bit more than you last mower, but I'm guessing your last mower didn't allow you to delegate anything to it. Now I just have to check the clearance and see if it can cut under me while I'm in my hammock. Honey, where's my tape measure?

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These shingles come with some amazing warranties like a 10 year 90% power output warranty and a 25 year 80% power output warranty. They also warranty the inverter that translates the power into something usable to your house as well as a water intrusion warranty. Also included is a free 10 year internet power monitoring system and the shingles themselves are rated for 125 mph winds which is extremely helpful around here. Not to even mention the resale value this would add to any house. They are energy star rated and you may qualify for a rebate for installing them. The rule of thumb is that solar panels increase the value of your house by \$20,000 for every \$1000 of reduction to your annual power bill.

This is a very interesting system and is definitely on our short list for our future construction project. Take a look and let me know what you think. As always, we are interested in hearing from our readers about energy saving construction products or hearing about your questions, so drop us an email.

Too Many Water Bottles

Sick of sending all those water bottles to the dump? As Americans, we purchase 8.3 gallons or 22 billion small bottles of water per year. Many thrifty consumers are now turning to filling their own bottles at home to save a few bucks. Tap water, filtered through your standard refrigerator filtering system is fine for drinking. Fridge filters take care of most of what you don't want to drink.

However, consumers are not changing the filters out at the rate recommended by the manufacturers. You should put in a new filter at least every 6 months or more frequently if your water requires more filtration. My problem has always been that when I am in need of a new filter and head to my local appliance center, they have every filter ever manufactured except mine. This leads to repeated trips until I can locate the one I need.

To avoid this, Whirlpool has come out with an interesting program. If you own a Whirlpool fridge, you can register at www.whirlpool.com and have the correct filter sent to you with no shipping costs, every 6 months. Instead of fighting to get to the store they just show up on your doorstep, no shipping, and no gas to get to the store. I like this idea. Now how can I get my HVAC filters shipped to me as well? Hmm.

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*Taking you from Dreams to
Reality
Psalms 127:1a*