

**Fix up Those Older Windows to  
Enhance the Beauty of Your Home  
And Save Money**

Mark Pierce<sup>1</sup>  
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*If you want to weatherize your older home start by decreasing air infiltration, then increase insulation levels. . When those tasks are done turn your attention to the heating system. If it is more than 10 years old and highly inefficient, consider replacing it. But don't bother replacing older windows with energy efficient replacement windows. The return on your investment, in terms of energy savings, is too small to be worthwhile.*

That, in a few short sentences sums up the advice of energy experts to owners of older homes. In fact, an analysis I did on my own home reflects the accuracy of this advice.

In Autumn 2003 I investigated how much it would cost to replace the existing single-glazed wood windows (R-1) in my older home with new, highly energy efficient double-glazed, low-E, argon-filled vinyl replacement windows (R-3). Here is what I learned.

- My existing 19 windows lose about 17.4 million BTU's of heat each heating season
- The annual cost of this lost heat is about \$130
- New highly efficient ENERGY STAR<sup>2</sup> rated vinyl replacement windows would lose about 2 million BTU's of heat annually. The annual cost of this lost heat would be about \$16.
- If I install the vinyl replacement windows the total annual savings on my heating bill would be about \$114.
- To realize this annual \$114 savings I would need to invest \$8000 in vinyl replacement windows.

Spending \$8,000 to save a little over \$100 per year is not a good method for saving lots of money on heating bills. And vinyl windows will subtract from the beauty of my older home, rather than add to it as my older windows do. In addition, there are other less expensive options available to me for reducing loss of heat through my older windows.

Follow these guidelines to increase the energy efficiency of older wood windows

- Replace broken window panes
- Remove and replace deteriorating glazing compound
- Make certain that sash locks are present and in good working order. A proper fitting sash lock has a significant impact on the air-tightness of a double hung window. The lock should pull the

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Pierce is an Extension Associate with the Department of Design & Environmental Analysis at Cornell University.

<sup>2</sup> ENERGY STAR is a joint program of the United States EPA and The U.S. Department of Energy. The ENERGY STAR label helps consumers identify the most energy efficient products on the market. Only windows with an R-value of 2.8 or higher can carry the ENERGY STAR label.

upper and lower window sash tightly together, and at the same time push the bottom sash down and the top sash up.

- Adding a thin piece of foam weather stripping to the sill and head jamb to improve the seal when the windows are closed and locked will further increase efficiency.
- Replacing worn parting bead (the narrow vertical piece of wood that separates the upper sash from the lower sash) will also tighten the window and improve energy efficiency.

So don't be fooled by misleading advertising.. Those beautiful single glazed windows in your older home are not nearly as inefficient as you may think. And there are simple, relatively inexpensive steps that homeowners can take to improve the efficiency of the windows in their older homes.