



Built To Last

Q I'm interested in a hardwood conservatory, but I'm worried that it will need a lot of upkeep. Is this true?

A Bespoke manufacturers take the issue of maintenance very seriously. Firstly, no work should be needed above gutter level as powder-coated aluminium fittings should be used. The windows should be painted using modern finishes. Water-based micro-porous formulas move with the timber and have a redecoration period of seven to ten years. This is just a case of cleaning the surface, rubbing down with glass paper to form a key, then applying the next coat. If the frame is well designed this will also help extend the life of the finish. Small radii on all edges and corners will enable the paint to be applied to an even thickness and avoid any sharp corners which will be susceptible to knocks and bumps.

Gerald Ruddick, Brightwood Conservatories (01264 771 900 or brightwood-conservatories.co.uk)

Open & Shut

Q Our garden is overlooked, which makes us feel self-conscious when we're in our conservatory. What would you advise?

A To ensure your privacy but still take full advantage of the space, I would suggest installing plantation shutters. These can be tilted to allow as much or as little light in as required and will also create shade when the space becomes too hot. They can be handmade to your requirements, ensuring a perfect fit, and are available in numerous finishes, from natural woods and stains to colours matched to your interior paints. Selecting a company that makes its shutters from high-quality materials will ensure they will last you for many years to come.

Rob James, Plantation Shutters (020 8871 9222 or plantation-shutters.co.uk)



A Blinding Idea

Q Our conservatory is south-facing, which causes us problems with the heat as well as the sun bleaching the furnishings. What would you suggest?

A Specialist conservatory blinds are designed to reflect the intense sunlight of the summer but also trap the heat between the soft pleated fabric to create an insulating layer of air for the cooler months. This is often achieved using a honeycomb-type construction, and can be easily cut to fit the many different and unusual-

shaped windows that conservatories tend to have. In hard-to-reach areas, remote control can be added for extra convenience. Fabric treatments are available to help to extend the lifespan of the blinds by reflecting light and repelling dust – perfect for protecting your furnishings and plants from the sunlight, too. A specialist retailer will be able to offer a wide selection of different designs and fabrics to suit your interior décor.

Andrew McManus, Luxaflex (0800 652 7799 or luxaflex.co.uk)



Past & Present

Q I'm thinking about adding some extra space to my Edwardian property, and I'd like something a little different. Is it possible to combine a period house with a more contemporary conservatory?

A It is an increasingly popular approach to combine clean modern engineered structures with period properties to create a stark yet sympathetic combination of juxtaposing styles. This acknowledges the heritage of the original and compliments it with the addition of leading edge architecture. A specialist will be able to design and build entirely bespoke structures in aluminium and glass, and will happily work with your architect or directly with you through its own network of design consultants. Initially requirements are ascertained, imagination encouraged and design ideas discussed in order to enable the consultant to create a structure that reflects your aspirations. Such structures are usually distinctive one-offs but will be designed sympathetically with regard to your property. Similarly an expert company will be able to offer you a one-stop shop, creating the design, arranging for planning approval and installing the structure. Where necessary they will work with your preferred builder or alternatively recommend their own.

Michael Barnes, Apropos Conservatories (0845 434 8901 or apropos-conservatories.com)