

BRIDAL SUPPLEMENT: A COMPLETE GUIDE TO PLANNING A VALLEY WEDDING

Hudson Valley

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The Valley in Winter

HOME & GARDEN

**A glorious winter garden
(and how you can create one)**

Outside in: adding a sunroom

Troy's hi-tech architect

Plus: The winter wedding

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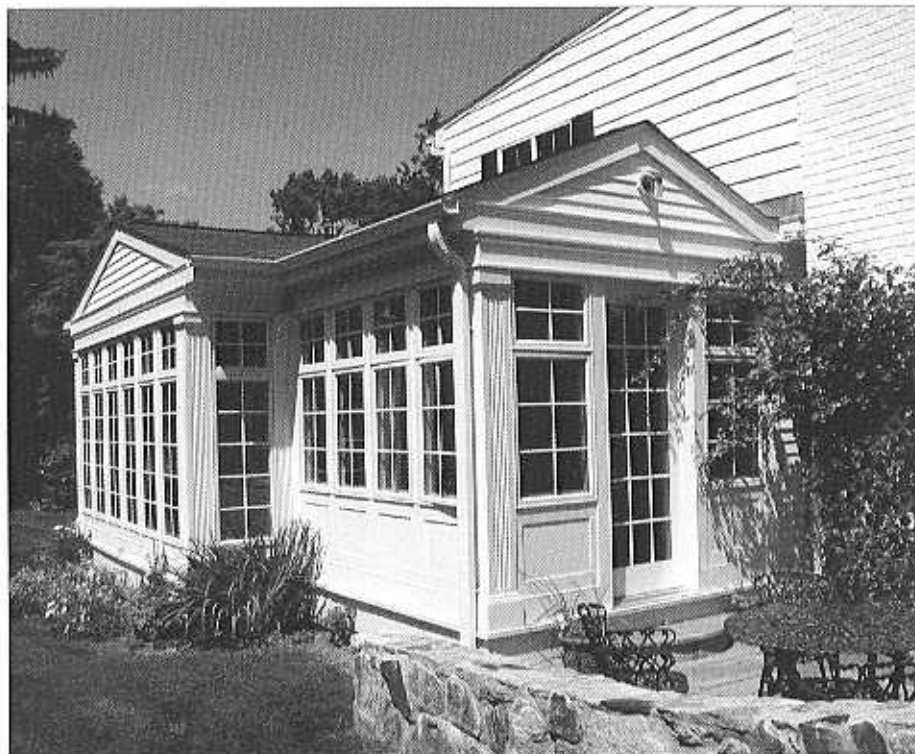


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hether we abhor or appreciate winter, most of us move through it acutely aware of our preference for the comfort of "inside" while doing our best to keep "outside" — well, outside. Then there are those people who are able to enjoy the best of both worlds simultaneously.

"We can't imagine how we ever lived without it." Fred Smith is talking about the sunroom addition he had attached to the back of his early-1800s farmhouse in New



Hibernation Haven

by Mark Burns

Sunrooms allow homeowners to enjoy the outdoors in comfort all year long

Paltz, Ulster County. "It's allowed us to be very comfortable all winter long. It is a hibernation haven."

When Smith and his wife, Laurie, retired from teaching in 2000, they considered doing what so many people at that stage of life do to escape the harsher months: packing up and moving to Arizona or Florida. But they didn't like the idea of leaving family and friends, their home and town, just at the moment when they'd have more time to enjoy them. Still, says Smith, they needed "a respite from winter." The solution was a 29-by-16-foot sunroom, facing south, installed by Chris Smalley, owner of Hudson Valley Sunrooms in both Port Ewen, Ulster County, and Beacon, Dutchess County.

Smalley says that the number one factor in choosing or designing a sunroom is "the kind of glass that's used." Obviously a sunroom is made almost entirely of glass, and if it is to be useful every day of the year — a requisite for most homeowners — then it's important to use windows with the proper "R-value" (an insulation measurement of heat resistance). New York State

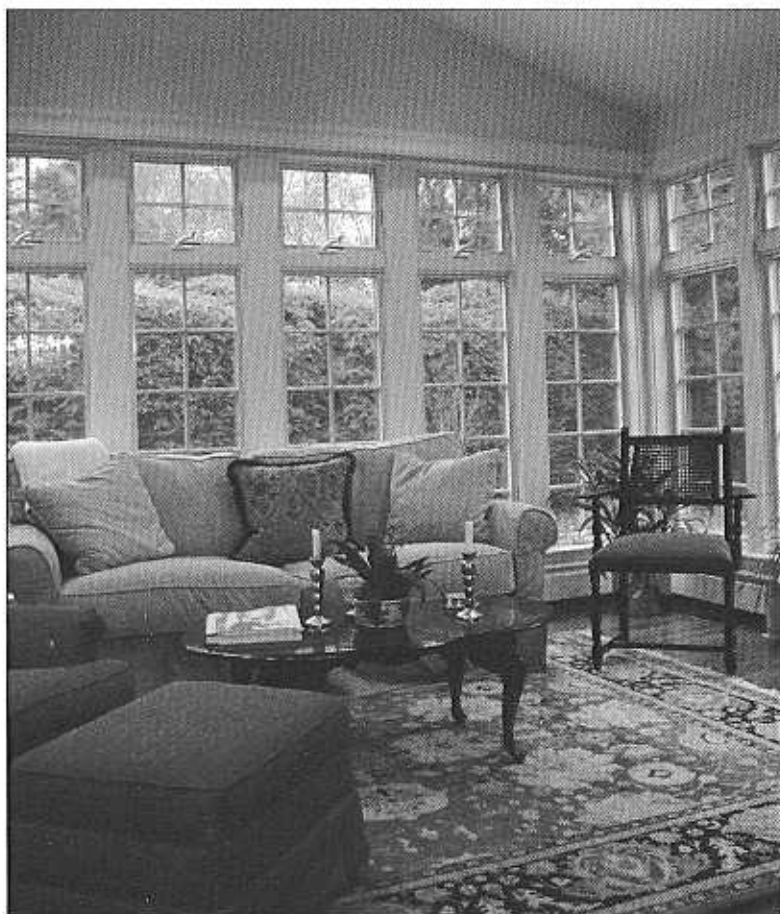


A contemporary sunroom in New Paltz; above, a more traditional look

recently adopted the International Building Code, which mandates specific requirements regarding heat and energy loss. These determine whether or not a sunroom or solarium can be heated with a fuel

source, making it a year-round or three-season source of pleasure.

While the idea of a room warmed by winter's bright, direct sun is very appealing, Smalley cautions that without the



Antiques adorn the sunroom designed by Mark LePage

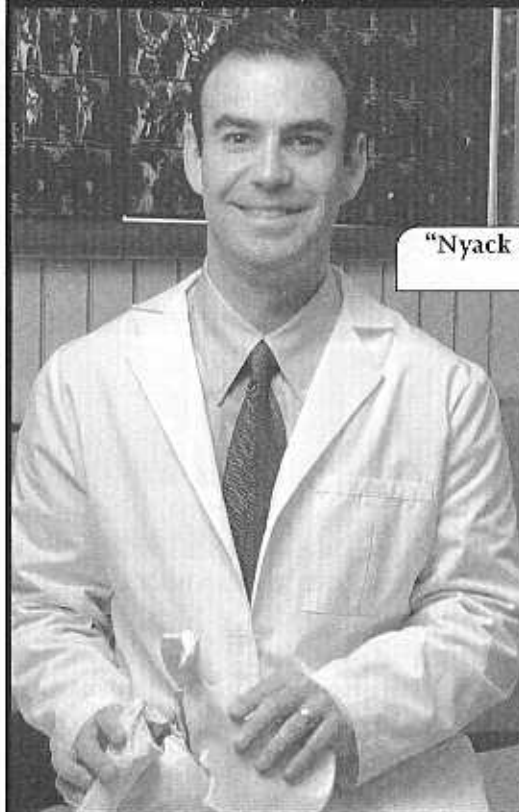
appropriate windows, "solar heat gain" can be a big drawback, even rendering a room unbearable during the hotter seasons. Homeowners should be able to easily open the walls of glass to expose screens that will provide adequate ventilation. Check UV ratings, too — sunlight can fade upholstery, carpets, and even artwork.

Additionally, choices must be made regarding single-glass, double-glass, and low-E glass. (Single glass is not recommended because, among other drawbacks, it fogs up like your windshield at certain temperature differentials.) Smalley says that all glass used in installations by Hudson Valley Sunrooms (a Four Seasons Sunrooms dealership) is "fully tempered safety glass — you can walk on it" and the R-values are among the highest available.

Daniel Jesco, branch manager of Patio Enclosures, a custom sunroom/solarium design and installation outfit in Albany, advises homeowners to ask about snow loads when considering roof design. While the roof of a project in the Catskills must be able to hold a 55-pound snow load, the same project in the Adirondacks must withstand an 85-pound load. Patio Enclosures, which has its own staff of engineers, uses a foam-and-aluminum I-beam roof system, with the foam available in three- to six-inch thicknesses in two shades: white and sandstone. Jesco also points out that when an aluminum framework is used for the support structure, it must be "thermally broken" so there is no transference of heat or cold between outside and inside.

Sunrooms can be prefabricated or custom built in a variety of styles. Those with glass ceilings may resemble 19th-century greenhouses or conservatories, or they may have a more modern design with curved eaves. Mark LePage, AIA, of Five-

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cat Studio, an architectural firm in Pleasantville, Westchester County, recently designed a custom sunroom with a traditional shingled roof as an addition to a client's house. "The intention was to create the same concept as a sunroom, but with the more permanent and solid feel of a room," he says.

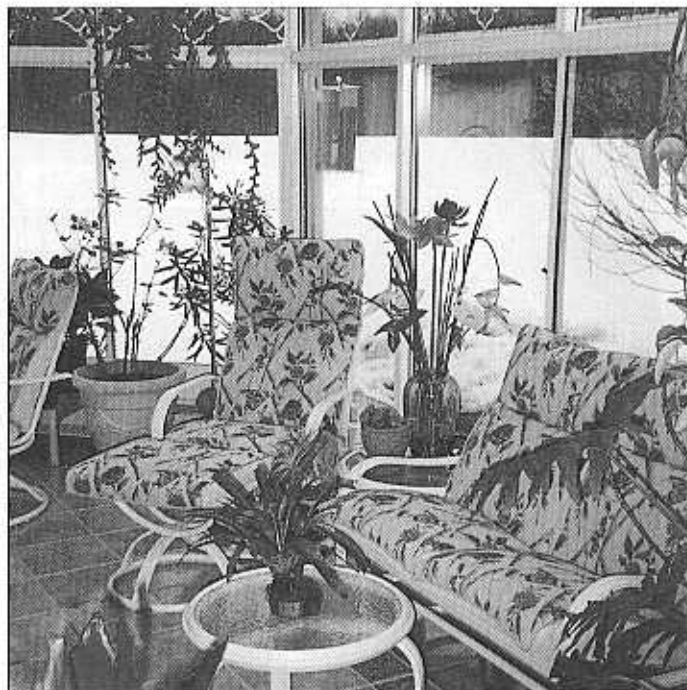
LePage believes it's important to "design for flexibility," so that the room can be used year-round. In summer, "you can open all the shades and windows and have a screened-in porch, and in January you can close the windows and watch the Super Bowl." His recent

The beauty of it, and the fragrance, it's like being in a tropical setting

project was designed with casement and awning windows, to allow for catching and directing breezes during warmer days. While most sunroom installation companies use aluminum for structural integrity, LePage's sunroom was "fully trimmed out with real wood and wood floors." It's used as a family game room and includes a fireplace, wet bar, and entertainment center.

It seems that most sunrooms become an integral part of home life. Besides having a hot tub and breakfast area, the Smiths' sunroom contains more than 150 tropical plants, including a very large gardenia that has been known to flower with nearly 200 blossoms in the dead of winter. "The beauty of it, and the fragrance, it's like being in a tropical setting," says Smith — even when there's a foot of snow on the ground.

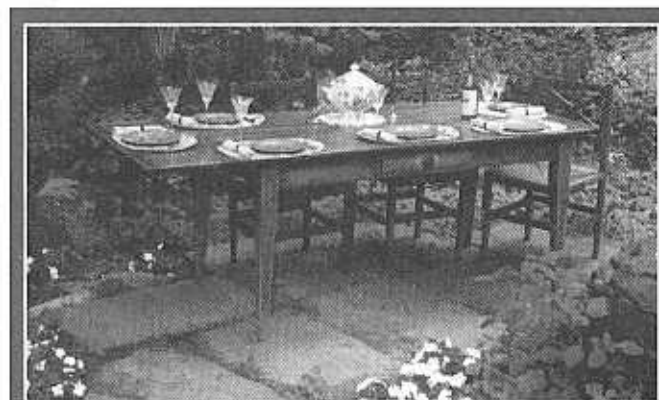
One word of caution: building a year-round sunroom does not appear to be a project for the home handyman. "I've torn down and



The Smiths' sunroom: letting the outdoors blossom within

replaced more of those than I can remember," says Smalley. The main reason: "glass failure." He says it's very difficult to get the proper glazing and to support all those individual glass panels, especially if the roof is sloped.

That's not something you want hanging over your head. ■



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