



SHEDDING LIGHT ON CURTAINS

Don't wash your hands of curtains or blinds. They have a surprising durability and are welcomed by tenants.

By Louise Richardson

WHILE HAVING CURTAINS, BLINDS

and other window treatments in a home is aesthetically pleasing, it's also important in terms of privacy and especially important for managing energy use.

Most tenants will appreciate at least some basic form of window coverings. Even if you opt for better quality products, the outlay involved can be surprisingly modest.

In colder parts of the country, thermal-lined curtains [sometimes called drapes] will increase comfort while keeping power bills down. The thermal backing fabric is so-called because it has an acrylic coating which, in effect seals it and stops cold air coming through.

Interior designer Helen Slater advises going as "long" as you can.

"Apart from the fact that short curtains on short windows don't look particularly attractive, thermal lined curtains that go past floor level and bunch very slightly will help the room retain more heat, and that is important for people on a strict budget," Slater says.

"Nationwide, chain stores often have specials offering up to 50% or even 60% off their ready-made ranges and this is the time to dive in and stock up for all your properties."

MEETING STANDARD

The standard lengths for curtains are

160cm, 205cm and 220cm but most companies offer a shortening service. Prices start at around \$50 per pair but noticeably better quality kicks in around \$150. Tab Tops can be cheaper because they are easier to produce and these hang simply on a rod, rather than a rail but they don't hug the window as tightly as a pencil-pleat curtain.

Many of the ready-made curtains available these days can be washed in warm water which makes them practical and an added benefit of thermal backing is that curtains are less likely to be damaged by mildew.

Property owner Sarah Evans always puts thermal curtains in her rentals and often finds excellent second-hand examples in charity shops or on-line trading websites.

"I usually get them dry-cleaned or washed at a laundromat and then they're as good as new. It never ceases to amaze me what lovely, and often very expensive curtains people consign to charity."

BLIND SPOT

Blinds can be another good choice for landlords and again, watch out for regular 'deals' and specials.

Wooden blinds are perennially fashionable but like any other louvre style they require regular, wiping down to reduce dust build-up, and this may be a problem if your tenants aren't that way inclined.

Auckland investor Diane Miles has

RENOVATION: CURTAINS

Curtains with thermal backing are less likely to be damaged by mildew - something tenants will appreciate.



USEFUL TIPS

- 1 When you know a tenant has small children, pop out to the charity shop and source patterned age-appropriate curtains. It will cost very little and help make a small person feel instantly at home.
- 2 If a tenant plans to replace the supplied curtains with their own for the term of their tenancy, ask them to store yours carefully in a warm dry place, for re-use in future - or take them to a store.
- 3 If finding a suitable window treatment for a bathroom is problematic, consider using the decorative plastic film that can be found at most DIY mega-stores.

started installing aluminium blinds when she refurbishes the rentals she owns with husband, Steve.

"In the past we always used ready-made curtains for warmth and nets for privacy," Miles says. "Then we'd simply replace them every few years.

"Now we've decided that the blinds make the house look more modern."

TREATMENTS

Diane Miles believes it's wise to provide pleasant window treatments especially for well-established and reliable tenants.

"Our houses are simple ones but I always ask myself if I'd be happy living there, and the answer must be 'Yes!'"

Aluminium blinds are easy to find at home or hardware chain stores and furniture stores. They can usually be cut down to fit your window and if they're too long, slats can simply be removed from the bottom. They can be found for less than \$100 each although you'll pay more for really good quality.

If you regularly refurbish your investment properties, perhaps on a cyclical basis, it's well worth visiting your local Resene ColorShop where they offer a fabric collection in colours that have been specially chosen to complement their best-selling paint shades.

The pencil-pleat curtains, or blinds, are custom-made so they fit windows perfectly, then they are delivered to your home. What's more, you can even order matching cushions.

ON A ROLL

Ready-made roller blinds are easy to find and cheapish. They can be a good choice if the windows in your property are a standard size or they can be custom produced but this raises the cost.

Roller blinds can get quite grubby - especially if they're light in colour and if they're pulled down too hard or too fast-



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there's a chance they'll fly off the window and hurt someone or at least damage paint work as one owner has said, from bitter experience.

However, sun-roller blinds, which are made from a mesh fabric, can be invaluable in rooms where sun exposure is intense.

OTHER STYLES

Roman blinds let you incorporate thermal backing with less expense than curtains although they can still allow heat to escape around the sides, so bear that in mind.

Again, if your windows are stand-sized you'll be able to buy ready-made blinds without any trouble, but having them custom-made can be pricey.

Always be very wary with roman blinds if your tenants have children - especially small ones - and warn them not to place a cot or toddler's 'first' bed close to where the cord hangs down. Children have been known to become trapped in these

cords - with tragic results, so if you do install such blinds, make a special point of checking their proximity at every property inspection. Most now come with a "cleat" to clip the cord to, so look out for this feature.

Other types of blinds include Austrian - a frilly style and classic dust collector and vertical blinds, which are essentially venetian blinds that hang down instead of across the window.

FASHIONABLE

Whatever choice you make for your property really depends on its location and the type of tenants you hope to attract.

For example, shutters always look good and they're very fashionable right now. If they're wide, wiping them down is quick and easy but they are also relatively expensive because they must be custom-made.

This means in general, they are probably only a fashion-forward option for high-end properties with generous rental yields. ■