

BUYER'S GUIDE TO

# EXTERNAL SHADING

Spend more time outdoors this summer with shading that lets you enjoy the warmer months come rain or shine



**E**xternal shading can serve multiple purposes, including providing cover for an outside zone, which allows you to take advantage of the long summer days. It can also help moderate the temperature of highly glazed internal spaces such as extensions. 'Shading can help cool down the areas that would otherwise normally require air conditioning or similar electronic systems, which can be costly to run,' says Rebecca Clayton at IQ Glass (01494 722 880; iqglassuk.com). And some use it as an architectural statement. 'It is surprising how many of our customers buy our products not just to reduce heat gain, but for aesthetics,' says Dave Lynes at Aluminium Systems (01455 848 300; alusystems.co.uk).

We tend only to consider the benefits of external shading once spring comes around, but this is a design feature that you can incorporate into your building, renovation or extension project to help you enjoy your space in all seasons. If you get this element right, you can improve both the interior and exterior of your home. Options include awnings, brise soleils and contemporary louvres, but you can even design the building with projecting eaves or deep window reveals, says Ben Ridley, director at Architecture for London (020 3637 4236; architectureforlondon.com).

## LOUVRES & BRISE SOLEILS

Brise soleils are generally fixed elements designed to reduce heat gain and glare. They come in many different forms, from lattices to pierced screens and blinds of split bamboo – think Le Corbusier's colourful sun baffles on Cité de Refuge in Paris. 'When the slats are horizontal they perform a similar function to projecting eaves: they work with the different angles of the sun throughout the seasons to mitigate solar heat gain,' says Ridley.

Fully automated louvre roofs are the most advanced versions of external solar shading. 'By integrating all motors and electrics within the minimal roof structure, you can allow them to rotate 120° and enable shading throughout the day,' says Clayton. 'Modern louvre roofs should have water-tightness testing, which means they create a full watertight patio roof when closed flat.'

The majority of automated roofs are made from aluminium. 'The metal is lightweight and doesn't

**Outdoor living** The Umbris system from IQ Glass starts at £700 per sqm including installation (01494 722 880; umbris.uk)

**Parallel lines** Icarus 150 structural solar shading, fixed screens and external roller blinds, Renson (+32 56 62 71 11; rensun-sunprotection.com)

**The benefits**  
Fixed solutions are best for reducing solar heat gain. Automated louvred versions are also available



## NEED TO KNOW

- » If your property is within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, conservation zone or green belt, planning permission should be sought.
- » Beware of low-cost external shading systems. They could be a false economy if they don't meet quality standards, are not suitable for the UK climate and hence don't perform well.
- » Make sure the design of the external shading permits enough daylight to enter the building in the winter. 'By using a solar shading product that is perpendicular to the glass elevations or windows, such as an automated louvre roof, you can maintain views,' says Rebecca Clayton at IQ Glass (01494 722 880; iqglassuk.com).
- » Consider the power of nature. 'In summer, the leaves of trees shade the structure, reducing the sunlight falling on it and providing a cooling effect. In winter, bare trees allow more sunlight to fall on the building, permitting heat gain and natural light,' says Ben Ridley at Architecture for London (020 3637 4236; architectureforlondon.com).

**Full control** Hella external louvre blinds with Somfy controls, in a project by Bere Architects (020 7241 1064; bere.co.uk)



## Slimline design

Weinor's Zenara cassette awning requires just two wall connections. From £3,000, Eden Verandas (0800 107 2727; edenverandas.co.uk)



**The benefits**  
Awnings are popular for their easy maintenance and quick installation

rust; it's also an extremely green product as you can melt the metal down and recycle it,' says Lynes. Additional elements such as lighting, heating and audio systems can be built into the roof profiles for true outdoor living.

**WHAT'S THE COST?** Modern louvred brise soleils from Aluminium Systems (01455 848 300; alusystems.co.uk) start at around £300 per sqm.

## AWNINGS

Awnings are a cost-effective option for people seeking to make the most of warm weather. 'The fabric will ideally be a solution-dyed acrylic offering outstanding dimensional stability,' says Stuart Dantzic, director at Caribbean Blinds (0344 800 1947; cbsolarshading.co.uk). The hardware should be powder-coated extruded aluminium, which

is corrosion-resistant, durable and maintenance-free.

An awning can be applied to almost any masonry structure, provided it is installed using the correct anchoring method. Metal fixings or resin-bonded anchors are strong and secure, but they are fairly costly and time-consuming to fit. The awning should project by a minimum of three metres and, provided it has a pitch of 14°, it can also provide light rain-shower protection. If it is covering a door, it should be at least 50cm wider on each side – for example, an awning for a four metre-wide set of bi-fold doors should measure five metres or more.

To keep your awning looking like new, spray it with a garden hose to remove dirt and debris. Stubborn marks can be wiped with a →