

It's curtains for drapes

From blinds to shutters, stickers to panels, it's simple to update your windows, says **Kate Watson-Smyth**

It is a myth put about by grandmothers everywhere that you should never buy velvet curtains, as they will never wear out and you will never have an excuse to replace them.

But in times of thrift, the idea of spending a little bit more on something that will really last isn't such a bad idea. After all, what could be more cost-effective than something of quality that lasts for years and years?

Window dressings (these days it's no longer just a simple matter of hanging curtains) can really make a room. You need to consider, not just the colour, but how they will look pulled back in the daytime, or drawn in the evening, complementing the lighting. Do you want blinds for privacy but curtains to soften the look?

Assuming you don't want net curtains, perhaps some opaque self-adhesive stickers would be the way to keep prying eyes out. Or you might want some good heavy curtains to keep the warmth in on those dark winter evenings. But if velvet and suede are too heavy for the summer, you can always change them when spring comes and create a fresher look for your room. Summer curtains can be



Glass act: (above) window stickers from Supernice; (right) sheer curtains from Natural Curtain Company

light muslin in soft colours that needn't cost the earth and can totally revamp a room with minimal effort.

Shutters are great for privacy and create a cool modern look. The New England Shutter Company has just launched a range of leather or fabric-covered shutters which, while not cheap, could make a great statement as well as giving maximum privacy and allowing the natural light in.

Nick Stanier, director of New House Textiles, which was founded in 1921 and is a leading blind manufacturer, says: "One trend is away from small fussy prints towards bold, strong colours and clear graphic designs, which will move towards stronger

colours including black, charcoal and inky blue. Translucent whites are also very popular incorporating textured weaves and white on white patterns."

FABRIC-COVERED SHUTTERS

Prices start at £365 per square metre for a fabric-covered panel, and you will have to supply your own material, but it's an unusual way to co-ordinate with the rest of the room and is a softer alternative to wood. If you want to really blow the budget, consider leather or faux suede.

The New England Shutter Company: www.tnesc.co.uk; 020-86751099

BLINDS

Blinds work well with contemporary décor and this company has a range for everything from French doors and picture windows. They've got loads choose from, and all the cotton is from US producers who minimise the use of chemicals, recycle where possible and use wood from accredited sources.

New House Textiles: www.newhousetextiles.co.uk; 01989 740684

SHEER PANELS

With spring round the corner, it might be time to think about taking down the



heavy winter curtains and replacing them with sheer panels which maintain privacy without cutting light. Made from 100 per cent linen, they give a fresh airy look to the room. Expect to pay around £200.

The Natural Curtain Company: www.naturalcurtaincompany.co.uk; 0845 5000 400

WINDOW STICKERS

A sound move if you live on a busy street and want to keep prying eyes out. They're easily removable and come in a range of colours so you could co-ordinate with curtains or blinds. From around £30.

Supernice: www.supernice.co.uk; 020-7613 3890