

Awning Reviews and Buying Guide:

The sun can be a powerful force in the peak of the summer and having awnings around your house can help keep things cool inside and provide a little shade outside. The majority of home awnings are put over decks, porches, patios, doors, and windows. Beyond protecting you from the sun, a large enough awning over a door will give you plenty of protection from rain as well. House awnings over windows help keep your furniture inside from fading due to the harmful rays from the sun plus they will keep interior home temperatures cooler. There are many benefits to putting awnings up around your house in terms of energy conservation and protecting the paint from premature fading and peeling.

When it comes to helping with your energy bill, the US Department of Energy says that awnings can lower the temperature gain in your house (due to sun) by almost 77% on windows facing west and east and almost 65% on those facing the south. My house faces the south with lots of exposure to the hottest part of the day meaning my air conditioning works overtime trying to keep our house cool on the warmest of summer days. A local contractor has told me that putting up awning on my windows and front door area would definitely cut my electric bill during the summer months from having to run the AC all the time.

Apart from the benefits of keeping your house cooler, awnings are great shade creators around porches, decks and patios. They will keep the direct sunlight off of you while protecting your patio furniture as well. If you have televisions or computer monitors anywhere near windows, awnings will help cut down on the glare from the sun. Awnings usually are offered as aluminum (metal) or sturdy outdoor fabrics like canvas. Aluminum awnings are practically maintenance free and very durable. The problem with aluminum awnings is that they not as decorative or stylish as the fabric awnings. Canvas and fabric awnings will take more care to keep them looking good and may require repairs to fix rips or tears caused by winds and harsh weather. You will have a good variety of colors and shapes to choose from with fabric awnings though. Both metal awnings and canvas awnings will resist some wind, but bigger storm conditions and hurricanes may require you to take them down temporarily to reduce damage.

Your professional awning installer can fill you in on the manufacturers warranty and recommendations. How big or wide should your awnings be? It's really up to you. The amount of window that the awning covers is considered its "drop". The US Dept. of Energy says awnings facing east or west should be between 65-75% drop and south facing windows should be much less at 45-60%. Smaller awnings tend to be more fashionable on homes and look better while the larger roll-up and retractable awnings can be an eye sore to some. The awnings around doors and windows can have side panels to complete the shading effect if you like. For those of you with larger decks and patios that get lots of sun, the electric retractable awnings are the perfect solution. Like a garage door opener, you simply push a button and the canopy or awning extends outwards creating shade in your desired area. These motorized awnings will protect you and your guests from the hot sun. Many people prefer retractable awnings since you use them in the summer to block the sun and then pull them back in the winter to allow in as much sun as possible.

Best Motorized Retractable Awning:

Durasol Awnings appear to be the leaders in motorized and manually retractable awnings. We did read in online forums that the motorized retractable awnings are nice (especially with remote control). No brand stood out in terms of reliability issues as they all took some complaints from customers. They are a nice luxury to have, but manually operated awnings work just as well and don't break as often. The SunShelter retractable deck and patio awnings from Durasol are offered in their Elite, Select and Classic options. The SunShelter Select is their most popular unit and works great as a retractable deck awning with motorized controls. The awning can be mounted to roofs or flat surfaces (side of house) and retracts into its storage area which makes it almost maintenance free. Owners say the "drop valance" is a nice addition to the awning letting you add vertical shade up to 42" down on the sides. Awning width ranges from 6' to 40' and it can project out almost 14'. Prices vary depending on the size you order. You can see more details on line at **Durasol.com**.

Manually Operated Patio/Deck Awning:

We found some Sunsetter manual crank retractable awnings online. Their selection of economy awnings that are retractable vary in width and projection. The 12 foot retractable awning is made with 600 Denier Polyester and there is a Teflon coating to increase the life of this unit. It extends out to 10 feet and requires a minimum mounting height of 7 feet 6 inches. Installing these can be bit tricky if you are not a DIY type of person. Consider hiring a professional to help. We further looked into Sunsetter awnings and found several listings on the Consumeraffairs.com site for their products. Although they claim to be the #1 selling awning company, it appears their customer service is lacking. The major complaints were for their motorized awnings and not for their manually operated units. One note that many owners said online is that the Sunsetter installation video and ad shows 2 people installing it quite easily and they said that is not true. We say buyer beware on this company.

Window Awnings:

Window and door awnings will cost you a minimum of \$200/each and some are closer to \$400 depending on material used (aluminum or fabric) and size (width and projection). The fabric window awnings are much easier to install than the retractable, larger awnings. It will add up fast if you have several windows to cover with awnings and doing only a few may make your house look silly. If you live in a warm climate, then window awnings should be a must and they will definitely help keep your house or condo cooler and save on your energy bill.

Stories based on research and customer testimonials online

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