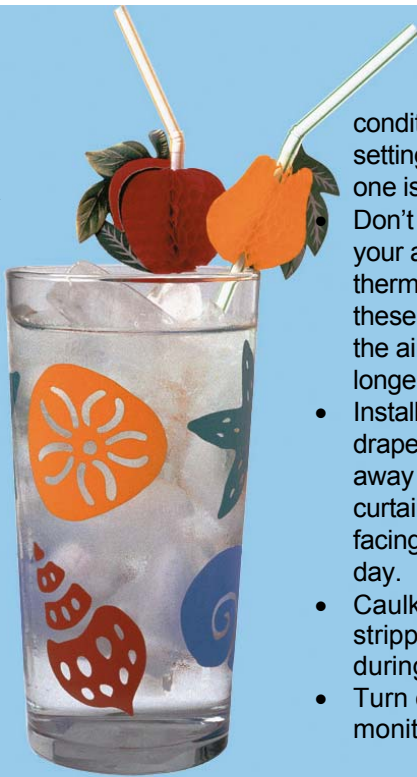


Chill Out

Want to keep your electric bills from going through the roof this summer? Here are a few environmentally friendly steps you can take to keep things cool.

- Open windows and use portable or ceiling fans instead of operating your air conditioner. Even mild air movement can make you feel three or four degrees cooler.
- Without blocking air flow, shade your outside compressor. Change air filters monthly during the summer.
- Use a programmable thermostat with your air



conditioner to adjust the setting at night or when no one is home. Don't place lamps or TVs near your air conditioning thermostat. The heat from these appliances will cause the air conditioner to run longer.

- Install white window shades, drapes or blinds to reflect heat away from the house. Close curtains on south- and west-facing windows during the day.
- Caulking and weather stripping will keep cool air in during the summer.
- Turn off your computer and monitor when not in use.

Counter Intelligence

Granite is so 2006. Concrete, glass and stone are gaining ground as popular materials for countertops. Concrete's biggest advantage is that it can take any shape, and it's not as pricey as some other natural stone materials. Because it is cast in molds, it can include subtle texturing and decorative objects such as pieces of metal, fossils or glass. If you are using concrete in the kitchen, consider placing raised strips of metal cast into countertops to support pots and pans near the sink and cooking area.

For those who crave ultra-modern design, another option is glass, which comes in nearly limitless colors, shapes, thicknesses and textures. And because it is nonporous, it is stain-proof and hygienic and can handle hot pots without cracking. Since it's translucent, it can be combined with other design elements, such as glass over aluminum or decorative tile embedded into the slab. Installing lighting under the counter creates added drama and elegance.

Finally, consider engineered stone, which is slightly cheaper than granite. It's made from quartz crystals and polymer resin, so it's nearly maintenance-free. Plus, it's heat- and cold-resistant, mildew-free, stain-resistant and harder than most things you put on it, so it won't scratch. Finally, it comes in dozens of colors — some mimic the real thing while others are made to match a designer's palette. The cost ranges from \$70 to \$120 per square foot with installation.

Say Yes to

Buying or selling a home can seem like an overwhelming task. But the right REALTOR® can make the process easier - and more profitable.

A Certified Residential Specialist (CRS), with years of experience and success, will help you make smart decisions in a fast-paced, complex and competitive market.

To receive the CRS Designation, REALTORS® must demonstrate outstanding professional achievements — including high-volume sales — and pursue advanced training in areas such as finance, marketing and technology. They also must maintain membership in the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® (NAR) and abide by its Code of Ethics.

Work with the top four percent of REALTORS® in the nation! Contact a CRS today.



Do you know someone who is thinking about buying or selling a home? Please mention my name.

This newsletter is for informational purposes only and should not be substituted for legal or financial advice. If you are currently working with another real estate agent or broker, it is not a solicitation for business.