

289

Extension Bulletin 289
June 1958



COPY 2

Window

Treatments

MYRA ZABEL



This archival publication may not reflect current scientific knowledge or recommendations.
Current information available from University of Minnesota Extension: <http://www.extension.umn.edu>

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
Agricultural Extension Service
S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction	3
Window blinds and shades	3
Things to consider	4
Basic window types	5
Curtain lengths	8
Length	8
Height	9
Width	9
Plain or patterned fabric	9
Problem windows	10
Altering window proportions	11
Treating groups of windows	12
Valances and cornices	18
Things to remember	20

Window Treatments

MYRA ZABEL¹

Windows are among the first things to attract your attention as you enter a room. They admit light and air and permit you to see the things beyond the interior of the room. Window treatments may add beauty to your room. They include all things used at windows such as: curtains, draperies, valances, cornices, shades, blinds, shutters, and the hardware to hold them in place.

Window treatments are used for a number of purposes:

- To control and regulate light
- To soften architectural lines
- To absorb noises—especially in rooms without rugs or carpet on the floor
- To camouflage windows having poor proportions
- To provide privacy for those who live inside
- To frame a beautiful view or to screen a poor one
- To regulate room temperature—keep out cold in winter and sun in summer

Window Blinds and Shades

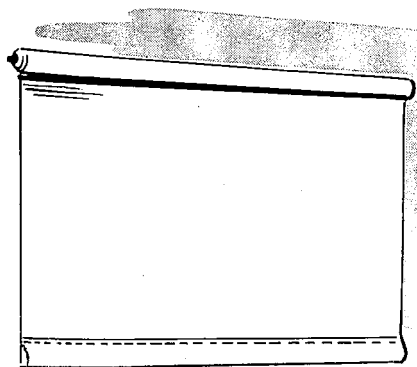


Fig. 1. Roller shade

To control light and provide privacy you may use:

Window shades are comparatively inexpensive and easy to keep clean. The best colors for shades are white or off-white because sheer curtains show the color of the shade through them. Shades are more permanent than the fabric used in front of them and white or off-white would go well with many changes of color schemes in the room.

Venetian blinds provide the best means of controlling light and air in a room, but are the most difficult to keep clean. The slats have to be dusted, the tapes become soiled and eventually, they must be taken down and given a bath. A newer member of the Venetian blind family is the vertical trav-

¹ Extension Home Furnishings Specialist.

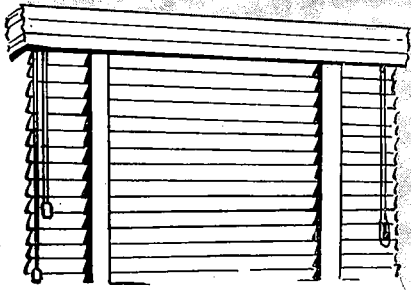


Fig. 2. Venetian blind

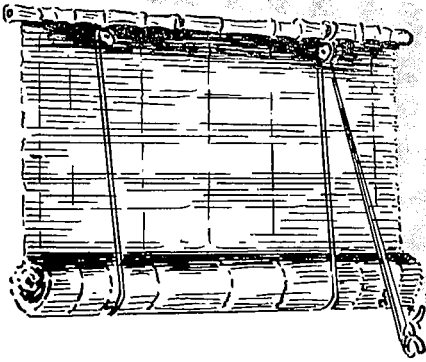


Fig. 3. Roll-up blind

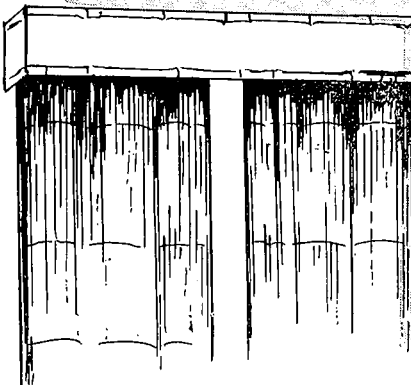


Fig. 4. Bamboo curtains

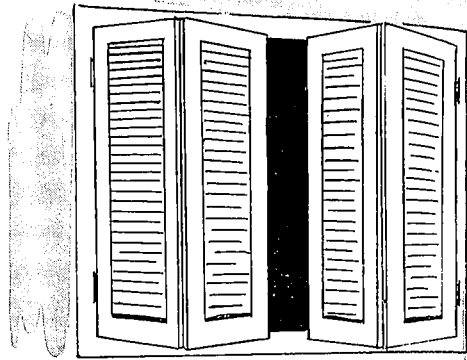


Fig. 5. Shutters

erse. The slats are metal and may be drawn back on each side. These blinds may be used as draperies at windows, as room dividers, or on double doors. They produce a smooth, tailored effect.

Roll-up blinds and curtains of matchsticks or wooden splints cut the glare of light and keep out the sun, but do not provide complete privacy at night. They come in natural color or may be painted various colors. Natural color darkens somewhat with exposure to sunlight. They are washable.

Shutters are sometimes used alone at windows where no other treatment is desired, or they may be used for their decorative effect alone or with curtains.

Things to Consider

Your choice of a window treatment will be governed by what you want it to do for the room and your family. The window itself is often the dictator, making it impossible for you to do much for, or to it. Consider these things before making a choice:

- The amount of money you can afford to invest in them.
- Whether you own or rent your home.

— The other furnishings already present in the room. You will want the window treatment to fit in well with other furnishings.

— The general character of the room, whether it is formal, very informal, or in between, and whether it is masculine or feminine.

— The style of furnishings, whether modern, traditional, Early American, Provincial, eighteenth century, Victorian.

— The size and shape of the room and the number of windows and their arrangement. Windows of uniform size are more easily treated than those of varying sizes.

— The time, energy, or money required to care for them.

— The fabric that will produce the desired effect.

— Among the fabrics from which you may choose are sheer, semisheer, and opaque ones.

— The style best suited to the window, room, and other furnishings.

— In styles you may select from tailored panels, ruffled tiebacks or Priscillas, cafe curtains, tier curtains, ruffles alone, draw curtains, side draperies, draw draperies, or a combination of them.

Basic Window Types

Before sizing up your own windows, let's have a look at the various types used. The double hung or sash window is among the most commonly used. If it is of average size, neither too wide nor too tall, and is well placed, it may

be treated almost any way you wish.

The bay window was meant to be a decorative group and may be simply treated in order to take advantage of light, or it can be a very dramatic center of interest in the room.

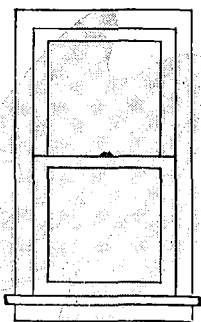


Fig. 6. Double hung or sash window

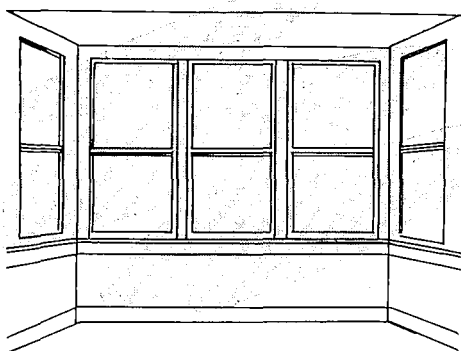


Fig. 7. Five-window bay

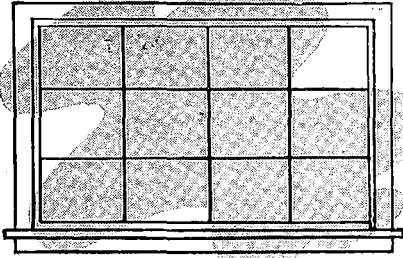


Fig. 8. Fixed window

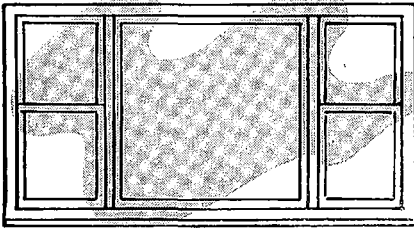


Fig. 9. Two picture windows

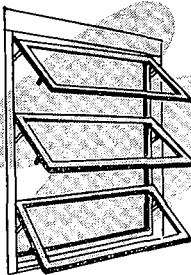


Fig. 10. Awning type window

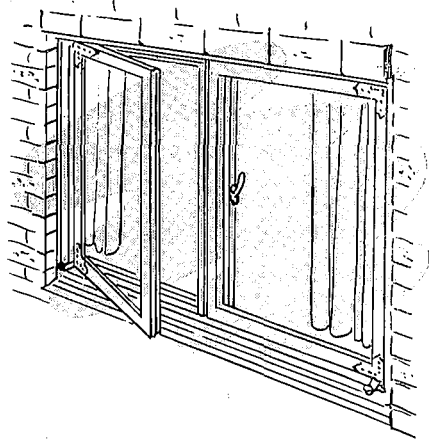


Fig. 11. Casement windows

The fixed window does not open and shut.

Picture windows are large and may be made up of a number of combinations of fixed and sash, fixed and casement, or fixed and awning windows. The ones illustrated have a center of fixed glass used with smaller windows on the sides for ventilation. Some face a beautiful view, while others do not and need to be covered. Their chief drawback is that a large amount of material is required to cover them well.

Awning type windows may be left open when it rains because the sashes, hinged at the top, open outward. Screens must be on the inside. They lend themselves to sill and apron length curtains or draperies at the sides. Use draperies which could be pulled across if privacy is needed.

Casement windows may present real problems. Those which swing out must have the screens on the inside.

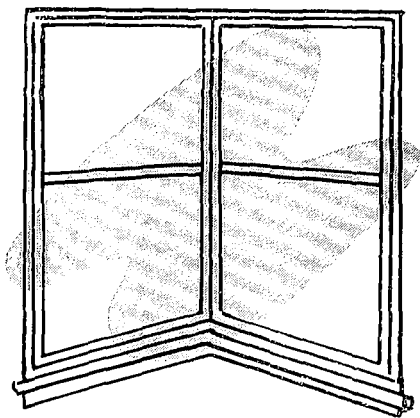


Fig. 12. Corner windows

The **corner window** may be treated as a single unit. Whether the windows meet at the corner or come close, leaving some wall space in the corner, you may use curtains over the whole area or only at the outsides.

Window walls open the side of a room to a beautiful view and will let in large quantities of light. For such a wall you may need both translucent and opaque fabrics. A sheer or semi-sheer fabric will soften light for daytime use; heavier draperies give the needed privacy at night.

Louvered or jalousie windows may be used on glassed-in porches and porch doors. They are made of narrow slats of glass installed horizontally. These slats may be opened and shut like those of Venetian blinds.

French windows or doors are used in pairs. They may be found in older homes. Many of those which were used between dining and living rooms have been removed, leaving the opening free. Some have been covered to resemble flush doors, while others have been covered with decorative materials. They may be treated the same as other windows in the room in order to give a uniform appearance.

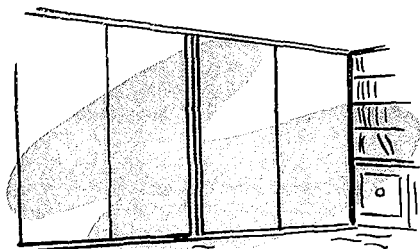


Fig. 13. Window wall

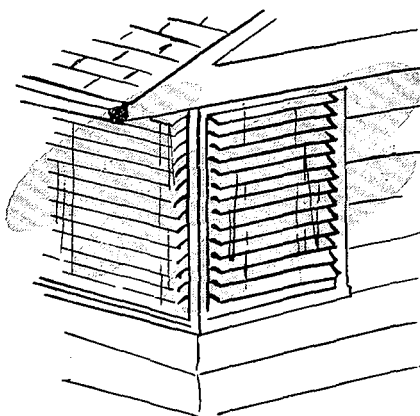


Fig. 14. Louvered or jalousie windows

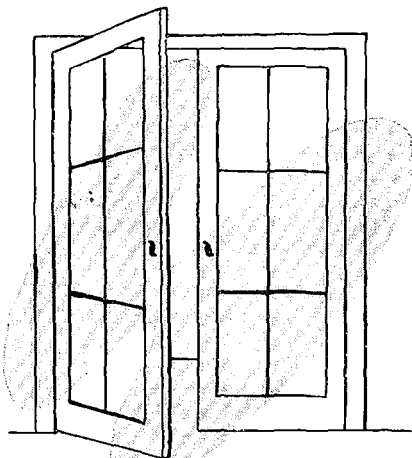


Fig. 15. French doors

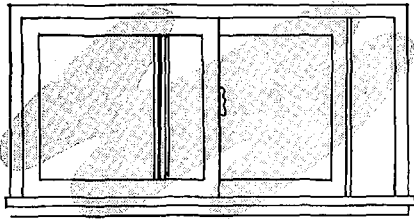


Fig. 16. Sliding windows

Sliding windows have sections which slide back and forth and usually are placed high enough so that blinds or shades are not needed for privacy. Such windows allow furniture to be placed under them. Treatments for them are usually simple curtains or draperies

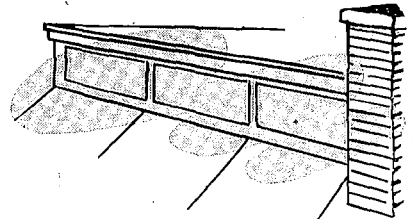


Fig. 17. Clerestory windows

that may be drawn across the window when desired.

Clerestory windows are at the top of an inside wall, installed under the roof line. Since they are placed high to let in light and may also be used for ventilation, no curtains are needed.

Curtain Lengths

Length

It is desirable for the length of curtains to end on a line even with architectural lines. The three lengths most often used are listed below.

Sill length curtains just clear the window sill. It is usually better to cover all of, or expose all of the woodwork trim. If the trim is good looking and the window is large, you may want to keep all of the window treatment inside of the casing.

Apron length curtains come to the bottom of the board under the sill. In this case, you would have the rest of the curtain cover the woodwork trim, leaving none exposed. Unattractive woodwork can be hidden in this way.

Floor length curtains come about one inch from the floor. Hemmed so that they clear the floor keeps them clean along the lower edge, and allows for slight variations in length due to atmospheric conditions.

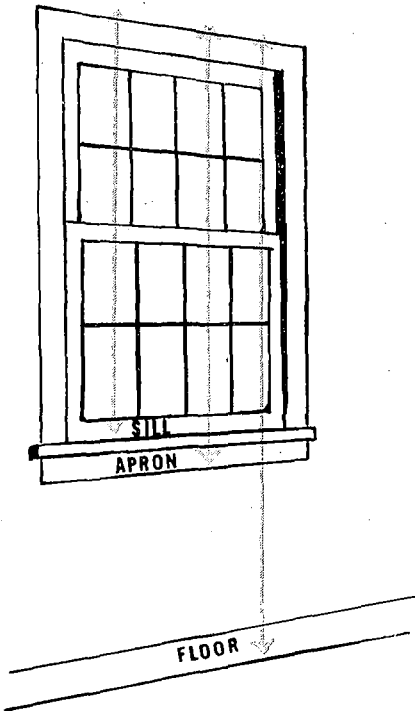


Fig. 18. Correct curtain lengths

Height

The upper edge of apron length and floor length usually begin at the top of the woodwork. Those hung all inside of the casing begin at the casing edge. Curtains may begin at the ceiling line, especially when you want to curtain a whole wall.

Width

To look their best curtains and draperies must be wide enough to hang in soft graceful folds. When using very soft and sheer fabrics you may need up to three or more times the width of the area to be covered. With fabrics having body and ones which drape well, you will need $2\frac{1}{4}$ to $2\frac{1}{2}$ the width of the area to be covered. When draperies are to hang only at the sides of the

window, and not drawn across, usually one width of 48-inch fabric will be ample for each side. For small windows in kitchens, bathrooms, or bedrooms, 36-inch widths may be enough.

Plain or Patterned Fabric?

When the walls are plain you may use a patterned fabric at the windows. With patterned wallpaper you would need to use a plain color to harmonize with the colors in the paper. If there are patterns in other furnishings, such as the rug, you would want to keep both walls and curtains plain. Too much of the same pattern in a room may become monotonous. Use small scaled patterns in small rooms and larger patterns in large sized rooms. Too many patterns make a room restless and confusing. It is better to use but one pattern having a dominant design in a room (figure 19).

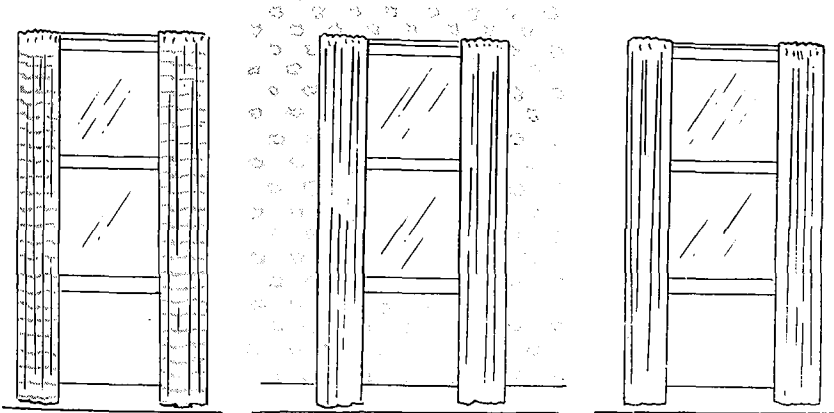


Fig. 19. 1st, plain walls, patterned fabric; 2nd, patterned walls, plain fabric; 3rd, patterned floor, plain curtains and wall

Problem Windows

The size and shape of windows may be made to seem larger or smaller, taller or shorter, wider or more narrow than they actually are. Opaque fabrics do the best job of camouflaging without revealing what has been done.

The too-narrow and tall window will appear wider if the drapery used is carried out onto the wall, just covering the window casing. Using a cornice across the top in the same color as the wall seems to cut off some of the height at the top. Cafe or tier curtains is another way to give a horizontal break. Stripes running crosswise give a widening effect.

To minimize the width and add height to the too-wide and low window, you may use full length draperies. Hang them so that they just cover the casing at the outside. You can gain extra height at the top by using a cornice or valance which just covers the woodwork at the top of the window and

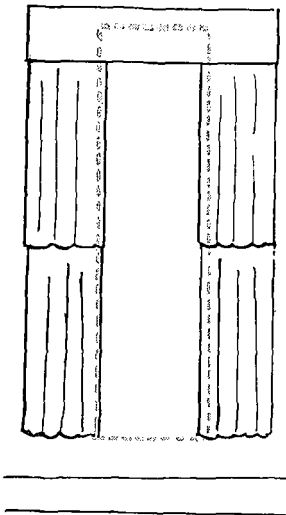


Fig. 20. Too narrow and tall window

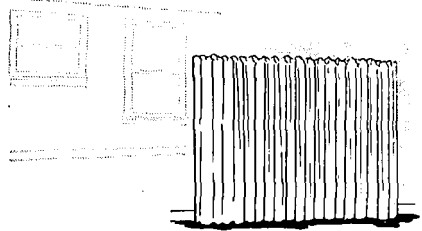


Fig. 21. Covering two unlike windows on the same wall.

extends on above. You may wish to use a vertical stripe to produce the impression of greater height.

When windows on the same wall are different heights and widths, try to make them appear alike. To minimize the height of the larger window use a cornice or valance across the top of the window. Hang the draperies over the window at the sides and carry

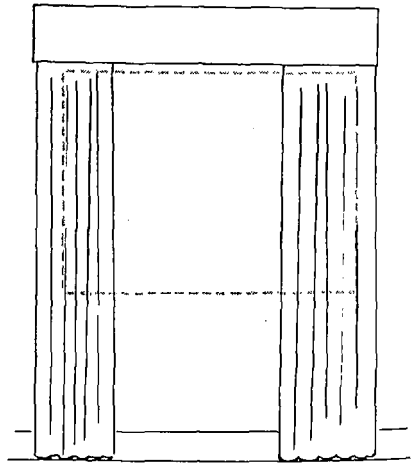
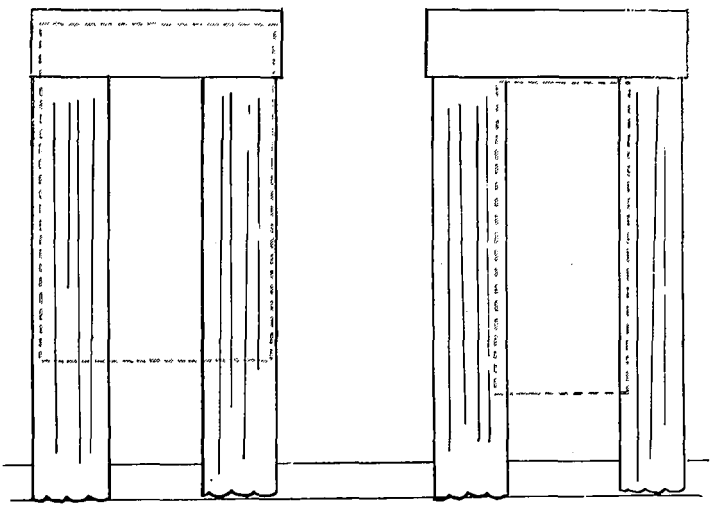


Fig. 22. Too wide and low window

Fig. 23.
Making
windows
on the
same wall
appear to
be the
same size
and shape



them down to the floor. To heighten the low window use the valance or cornice above the top of the window and carry the fabric onto the wall and down to the floor.

If the same wall has a door with a window in the upper section, you may use the same fabric you used at the

other windows, or you may use a sheer fabric of the same color shirred and held in place with rods at both top and bottom.

When problem windows cannot be treated to appear alike use a fabric the same color as the walls to attract as little attention as possible to them.

Altering Window Proportions

In order to alter window proportions you may need some means of attaching fixtures.

1. To heighten—add a board at the top above the trim.
2. To widen—use pieces of wood at the sides on which to fasten the rods or use rods which extend beyond the frame.

3. To add height and width at the same time—use a board above the trim and as wide as desired.

4. If rods are attached to the wall, special lead or plastic plugs may be used with the screws. Molly and toggle bolts may be used on plaster and wall-board.

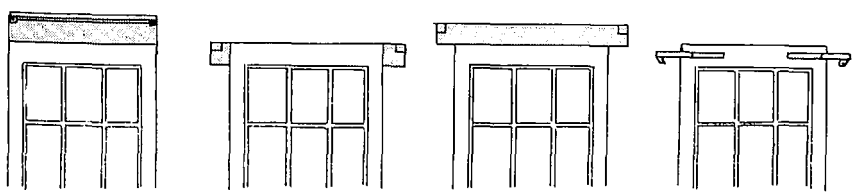


Fig. 24. Adding height Adding width Adding height and width Rods on the wall

Treating Groups of Windows

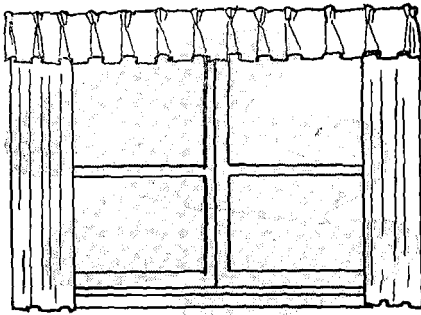


Fig. 25. Treating windows as one unit

Treat the group as one unit using draperies or curtains at the sides and a cornice or valance across the top to visually hold them together. If there is a wall space between the windows, you may treat them the same as above or you may wish to use the draw curtains over the whole area.

The corner window is completely covered with tier curtains and visually held together with a plain cornice the same color as the walls (figure 26).

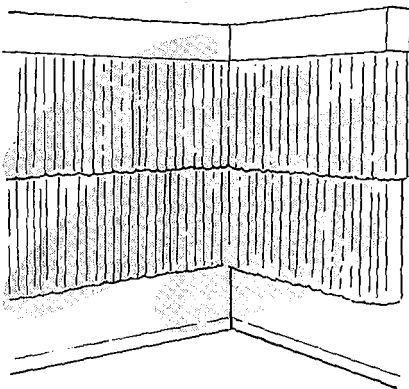


Fig. 26. A corner window covered with tier curtains

When a radiator or air conditioner must be considered, draperies may be used at the sides only. Short curtains may be used and drawn across when privacy is needed.

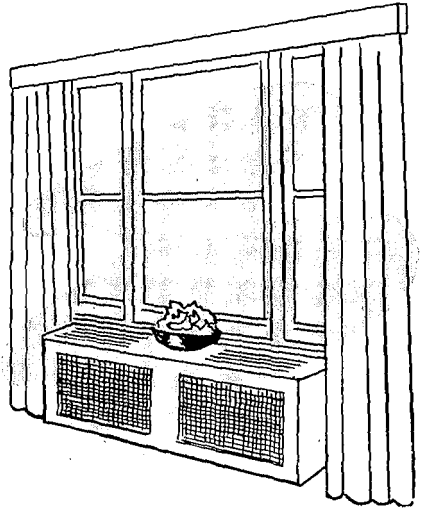


Fig. 27. Treating windows over a radiator

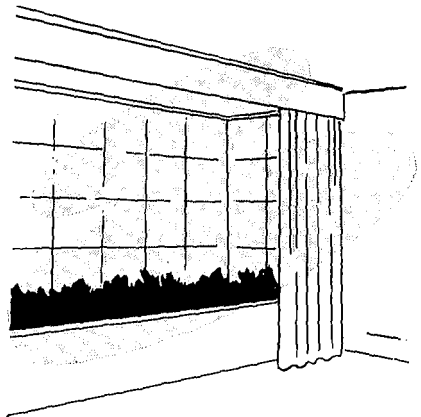


Fig. 28. One way of treating a bay area

One way of treating a bay window is to hang the draperies on the wall just outside of the bay with a cornice over the entire window and drapery section. Here the plants get full benefit of the light (figure 28).

Along with Venetian blinds, draperies were used at the outside edges of a corner window. The full valance at the top unifies the two (figure 29).

The ruffled tieback or Priscilla curtain is generously full. When tying back curtains place the tieback so that it does not cut the area exactly in half. Here the upper part is about one-third less than the lower area giving a pleasant 2-3 division of the space.

Stripes were used to create a horizontal and widening effect. All of the curtains were hung inside the recessed area (figure 31).

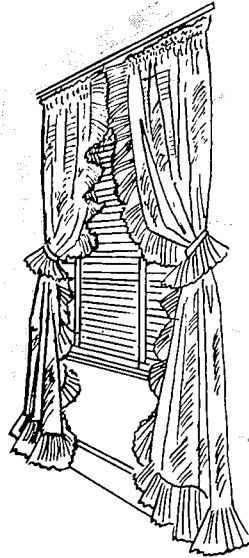


Fig. 30. A ruffled tie-back or Priscilla curtain

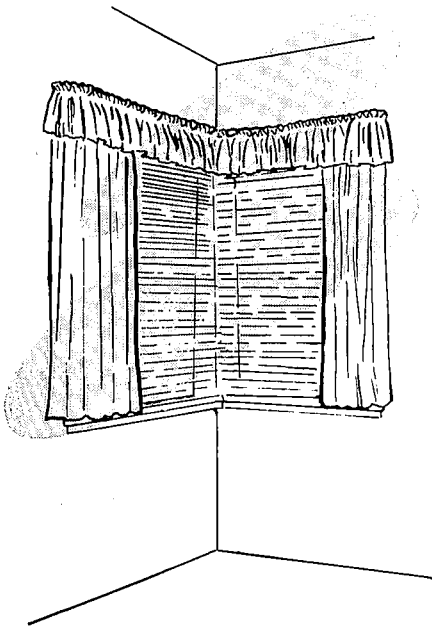


Fig. 29. Corner windows

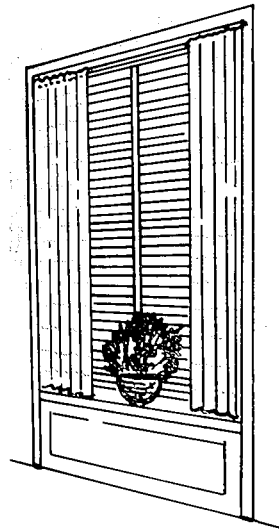


Fig. 31. Stripes were used to create a horizontal effect

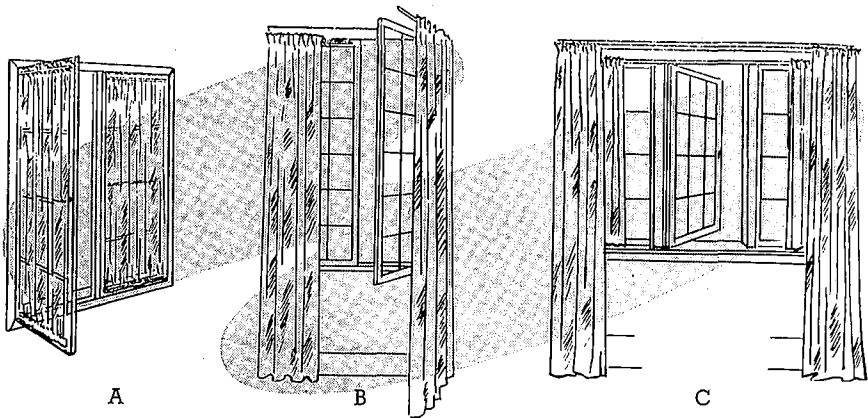


Fig. 32. Casement windows

For casement windows (figure 32):

A. Sheer fabric was shirred and attached to the top and bottom on windows which swing in.

B. Draperies on rods were attached to the window so they will swing with the windows.

C. Draperies were used at the sides. The sheer draw curtains may be pulled for privacy or left at the side when the casement windows, which swing out, are opened.

For the window in figure 33, a cafe curtain was used on the lower sash. A shaped wooden cornice was used across the top. The upper sash was left free to let in light.

For the window wall the simple translucent fabric was used full and follows the horizontal structural line. It may be pulled back or closed as desired. Here it faces a fenced patio or yard. The semisheer fabric will soften the light but will not darken the room when the curtains are drawn in the daytime. If more complete privacy is desired, another set of heavier draperies would need to be used along with the more sheer ones. This whole wall means that many yards of fabric will be needed to curtain it well. Picture win-

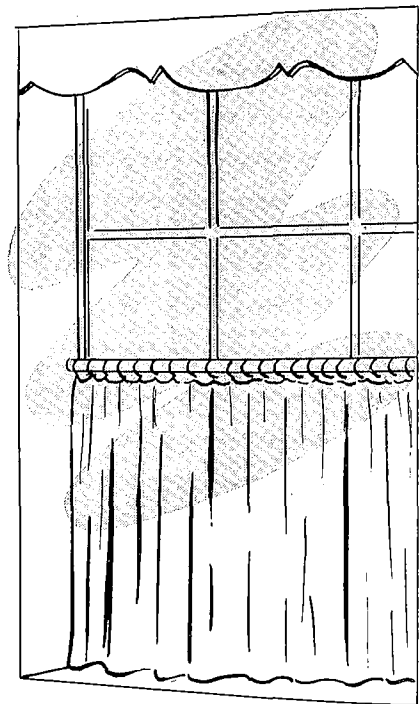


Fig. 33. Cafe curtain with shaped cornice

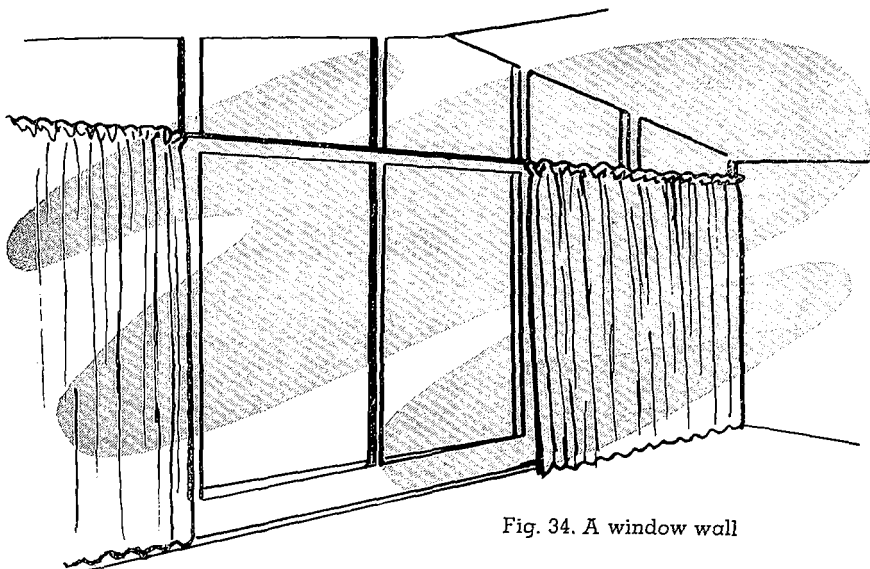


Fig. 34. A window wall

dows and window walls are expensive to curtain. Large draperies are often difficult to clean at home and expensive to have dry cleaned.

Shutters were used at the double window, along with a narrow ruffled valance across the top. They may be closed or folded back out of the way when and as you like.

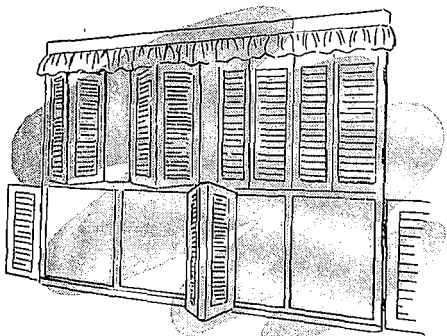


Fig. 35. Shuttered windows

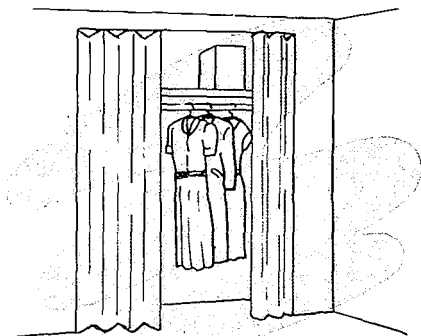


Fig. 36. Folding wood slats for a closet door

Folding wood slats, matchstick, and splint draperies may be used at closet doors and double doorways. They also are available for use at windows in porches.

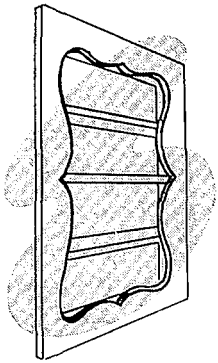
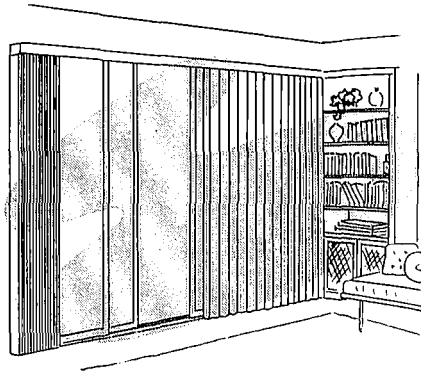


Fig. 37. A decorative cutout



A decorative cutout may be used on three or four sides of some windows. The shelves may be used for decorative objects.

Usually curtains at doors are used for privacy. These have sheer panels shirred and attached to the doors at both top and bottom. This is the simplest means of treating such windows.

The vertical Venetian blinds here are used on a window wall. The second illustration shows them pulled across and opened to let in air and light.

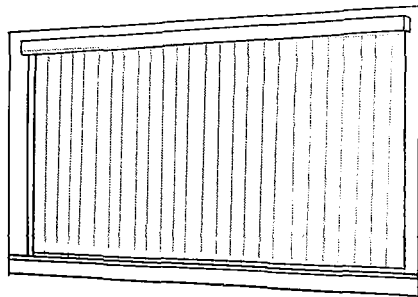


Fig. 39. Vertical venetian blinds

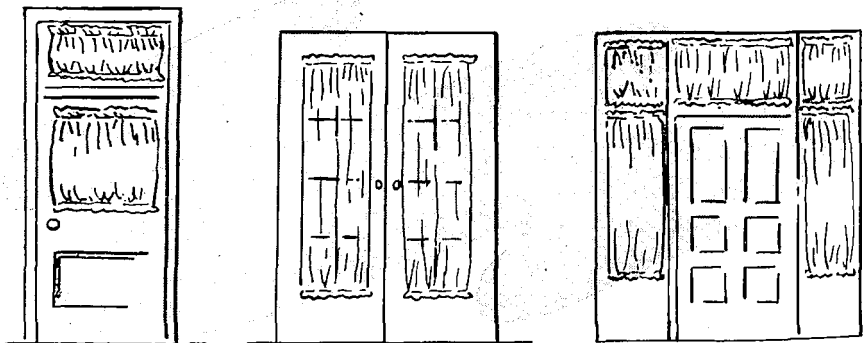


Fig. 38. Ways of treating windows in doors

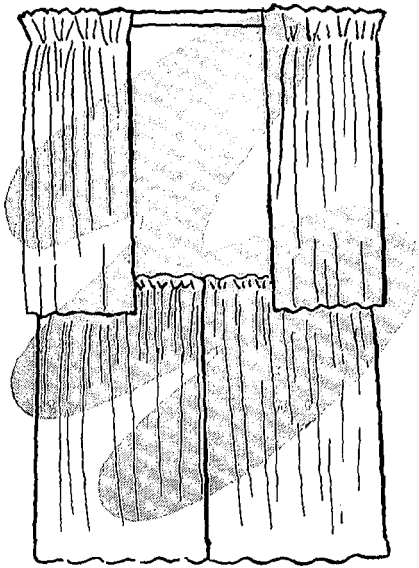


Fig. 40. Short draw curtains

Short curtains on traverse rods may be drawn at the top or bottom or both. They may be left open at the top for light while the bottom ones are drawn for privacy.

The small windows at each side of a fireplace may be treated the same as the windows in the doors or with decorative cutouts.

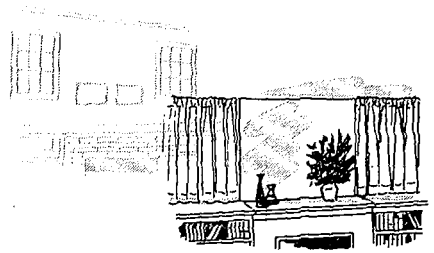


Fig. 41. Treatment for small fireplace windows

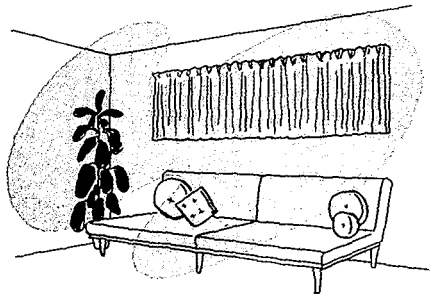


Fig. 42. Short draw curtains

Here very short draw curtains were used over a sliding window. Such windows allow furniture to be arranged beneath them.

Valances and Cornices

Valances and cornices may vary in width from 6 inches to about 12 inches depending upon the window and what you want them to do. The width of the valance or cornice needs to be pleasing in relation to the length of the curtain and the height of the window. Use a narrow width for short cafe curtains at a small window, and a wide width for full length draperies at a tall win-

dow in a large room. Valances may be: plain ruffles with a heading at the top, French pleated, box pleated, or flat with a shaped lower edge. Valances may be hung on regular curtain rods or on valance boards. Cornices are usually made of wood and may be shaped or plain, painted, papered, or covered with fabric.

Valances



Fig. 43. Ruffled valance



Fig. 46. Box-pleated valance



Fig. 44. Decorative ruffled valance

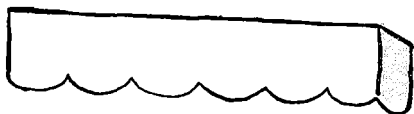


Fig. 47. Scalloped valance



Fig. 45. French pleated valance

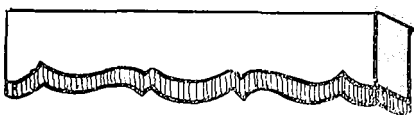


Fig. 48. Shaped valance

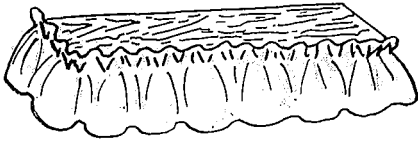


Fig. 49. Ruffle attached to a valance board

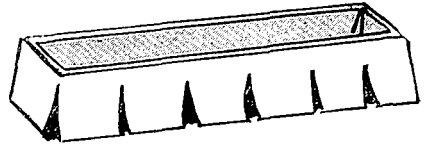


Fig. 50. Box-pleated valance hung on a rod

Cornices

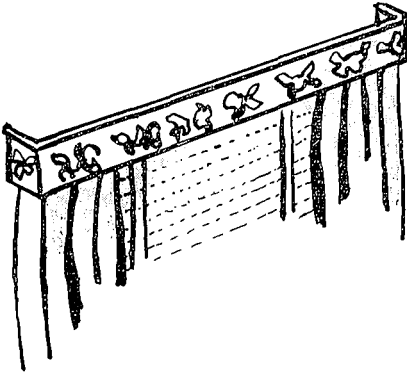


Fig. 51. A decorated cornice used with plain draperies

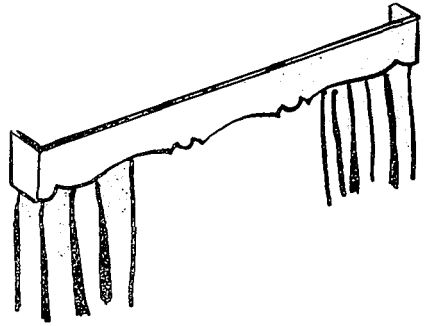


Fig. 53. A shaped cornice used with plain colored draperies

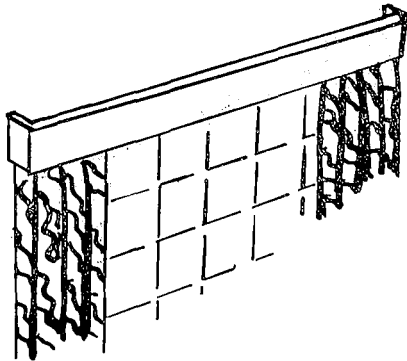


Fig. 52. A plain cornice with a molding at the top used with patterned draperies

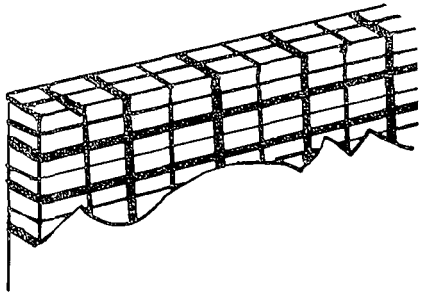


Fig. 54. A cornice covered with plaid

Things to Remember

- If a color is used for curtaining windows in any room, it should harmonize with the other furnishings in the room. Any color used at windows should be "sunfast" since fading is an ever-present possibility. Linings help to retard fading of curtains that will be drawn across the windows. Fading will be less if most of the curtain or drapery is carried onto the wall.
- Any window treatment should present a uniform appearance from the outside. Patterned draperies which are drawn at night often show the pattern conspicuously. Linings would give the desired unified effect.
- One way to renew faded curtains or change an effect is by tinting or dyeing them. Another way is to make short tier or cafe curtains out of longer ones.
- Old roller shades still in good shape may be given a coat or two of paint to give them a new lease on life. Hang the roller over the clothesline as you do the paint job.
- Buy the kind of rods and hardware that your window treatment needs. There are many varieties available. Good sturdy even rods will keep curtains and draperies straight. Wobbly ones can ruin the whole effect.
- It is always better to use a less expensive fabric and use more of it, than to buy expensive fabric and try to get along with less than the needed width.
- Size up your windows, then decide upon the treatment which will do the most for them. Treat them simply and kindly for they are the eyes of your room, they give it personality. Well chosen window treatments give a room a well dressed appearance.