

# The Seasonal Switch

I hate the high cost of air conditioning. I also hate stuffy houses, the closed windows, and the loss of fresh air. And yet, each year it seems that once those windows are closed and the air conditioner is turned on, it stays turned on until the fall, regardless of the fluctuation of outdoor temperature.

Knowing this phenomenon, I always wait as long as possible to turn on the air conditioner. I strip down to short shorts and tank tops. I run fans and take cold showers. I hold out as long as I can, but when that temperature hangs in the nineties during the day and refuses to drop at night, heat makes sleep impossible. That's when the windows are slammed shut and the switch is flipped on, usually for the duration.

In the last few years, I lived in a huge house with lots of windows. All but one of them was near to impossible to open. This inability to easily turn that air conditioner off and open the windows made me even more aware of the fact of how many days or nights it was cooler outside than inside.

So why do we do it? Why do we batten down the hatch and flip the switch, never looking back until summer's end? Summer storms are certainly one factor. When we leave those windows open when we aren't home, rain blows in. Pollen is a problem. Crime may be another. But I think the primary reason we shut those windows for months on end is a combination of laziness and a lack of knowledge in how to cool our homes naturally.

When daytime temperatures are high and nighttime temperatures drop, it's fairly easy to keep your house cool. Shut the windows in the morning and open them at night. You can use fans to help cool down the house at night. Set half of them to draw in air and the other half to blow it out. If you have a two-story house, try using the downstairs fans to draw in cool air and the upstairs fans to blow out hot air.

If you do turn on that air conditioner, pay attention to the outdoor temperature each day and each night. Turn off that air conditioner and open those windows every chance you get. Your diligence will be rewarded when you receive your electric bill.