

Staying Cool Shouldn't Burn a Hole in Your Wallet

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Air conditioning costs don't have to take a big bite out of a family's budget during the dog days of summer, says a Purdue University expert on refrigeration and air conditioning. There are a number of practical and inexpensive ways to reduce the monthly cost of home air conditioning, said Eckhard Groll, a Purdue professor of mechanical engineering.

"One of the biggest mistakes people make is they plant flowers or ornamental grass around their air conditioner's outside unit," said Groll, who also is a refrigeration and air conditioning researcher. "These plants block the air flow and make the air conditioner run a lot hotter and longer. In the end people not only pay a higher monthly electric bill, but they also cause their air conditioners to wear out faster."

Groll said in addition to making sure obstacles don't block the outside unit, there are a number of other ways for consumers to reduce air conditioning costs:

- Clean or change the filter on the inside unit of the air conditioner about every 90 days.
- Clean coils on the outside units annually.
- If using a window air conditioning unit, make sure the insulation around the unit is secure to prevent hot air from coming in and cool air from escaping.

- Most air conditioners have programmable thermostats. Set to a warmer temperature while you are gone and a cooler one when you are home.
- Make sure rugs, furniture and other obstacles are not blocking the air conditioning vents.
- Use blinds or heavy curtains to keep out direct sunlight.
- Limit use of bathroom and kitchen exhaust fans.

Air conditioning and refrigeration will be the key topics at two upcoming conferences at Purdue University. About 500 people from 30 countries are expected to attend the 11th International Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Conference and the 18th International Compressor Engineering Conference being held July 17-20.

Source: Purdue University

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