

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Unlocking the value of wooden doors**

*Wooden doors offer many benefits – wood is an excellent insulator, it is a green building material, and there is nothing that quite compares to the rich natural beauty of solid timber. So, if you are choosing wooden doors for your home, here are some tips from Cobus Lourens, from leading window and door manufacturer, Swartland, on what you can do to extend the longevity of these beautiful architectural features.*

25 June 2018, Johannesburg: Beautiful wooden doors can really add to the external visual appeal of your home. And although they do require some maintenance in order to keep them in tiptop shape, there are a few preventative measures that you can take that will not only minimise the maintenance required, but that will also increase the overall longevity of these valuable assets.

### **Understanding expansion and contraction**

It is important to understand that wood is a natural material, and it expands and contracts. This is because in nature, microscopic cells within a tree expand and absorb moisture from its environment, or as water flows through the wood to nourish and sustain the life of the tree. These cells contract, or shrink, when the water evaporates. Even after being cut down and processed, timber will continue to expand and contract as it absorbs moisture from its environment during the wet season, and loses moisture during the dry season. For this reason, it is important to not only seal the timber correctly in order to minimise moisture intake, but also to take various preventative measures to protect the wood from exposure to the elements as much as possible.

Cobus Lourens, from leading window and door manufacturer, Swartland, says that it is perfectly normal for wooden doors to take a while to adjust to the specific “micro-climate” of their location: “It takes a while for any timber door to adapt to the equilibrium moisture content (EMC) of the area. EMC is a term used to explain the amount of moisture in the air that all natural products will adapt to when exposed to a particular ‘micro-climate’. For example, in Hout Bay in the Western Cape, there is a very high EMC, averaging at 15%, while the average EMC for South Africa is 8%. To cater for all the various areas throughout South Africa, from wettest to driest, Swartland dries its timber to an average moisture content of 10%.

“As newly installed doors come into balance with the EMC of the area and the orientation of its installation, it will swell slightly during the wet season, and shrink slightly in the dry season. As a general rule of thumb, wooden doors will settle after two seasonal changes – after which, the doors might need slight adjustment,” he explains.

### **Ray bans**

Says Cobus: “To protect your wooden doors, you need to protect them from exposure to excess rain, as well as from the sun’s harmful UV rays, which can dry out the timber and cause it to shrink.” He says that you can protect your wooden doors by planting fast growing, evergreen trees that will offer them access to natural shade: “This will prevent your door from being exposed to UV rays for any extended periods of time, and offer the bonus of some well appreciated greenery around the entrance.” The colour of the door you choose can also help, notes Cobus: “Choosing a door in a light colour will help it to cope better with UV rays, compared to one in a darker colour. This is because light colours reflect the heat, while dark colours absorb it.”

### **Have you got it covered?**

However, according to Cobus, aside from regular maintenance, probably the best preventative measure to increase your wooden doors’ longevity is to include an awning or canopy over it: “The best long-term solution for protecting your wooden doors is to install some kind of an overhang. The overhang should extend the same distance as half the length of the space between the base of the door and the bottom of the overhang. The advantage of this solution is that it keeps the rain and the sun from coming in direct contact with the door.”

Aside from protecting your wooden doors however, the added bonus is that these overhangs, awnings or canopies also help reduce the energy required to cool your house down during the hot summer months, as they will regulate the amount of direct sunlight entering the home.

Adding an overhang to an existing house is pretty straightforward, but blending it into the existing roof can be a bit tricky. For this reason, Cobus says that if you are renovating or building a new home, it is something that needs to be considered during the architectural design phase of the project: “Including roof overhangs into the design of your home is worth the investment – they not only protect your wooden windows and doors, but they will help keep your home cooler, and they will protect your interior soft furnishing, window treatments and carpets from over exposure to UV rays as well.”

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