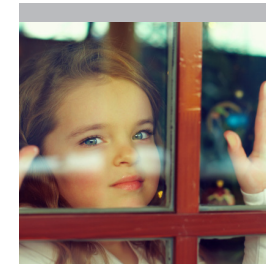
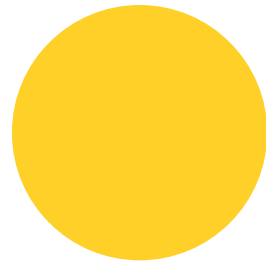
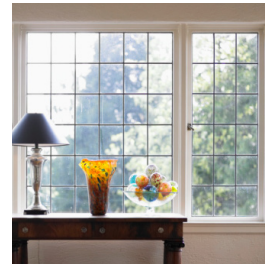
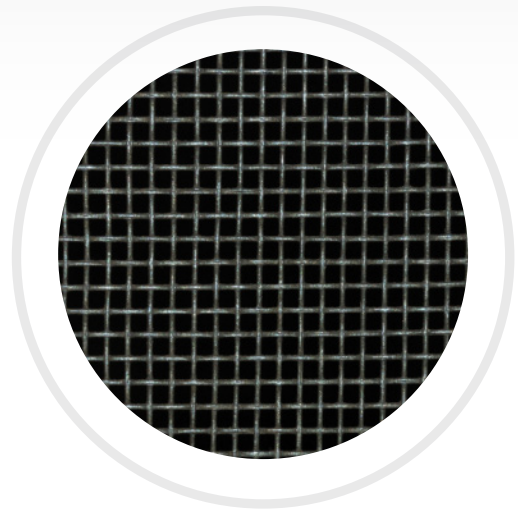


IMPROVEMENT CENTER



Guide to Protecting Against Nature

Walls can stand their own against storms, flying debris, bugs, pests and other forces of nature. Windows need a little help. Find out what you can do, from installing replacement storm windows to adding screens and shutters, to protect your view.



Guide to Protecting Against Nature

When it comes to protecting the interior of your home, nature can be a nuisance. Leave a window wide open for the night, and you could end up with stray cats, mosquitoes and a cross-section of the local beetle population roaming around your house. Do the same during a hurricane, and that section of the house will need replacing — and that's after you get the water and debris out.

There are many ways to upgrade your windows to help them and your home weather the storm. That way you can tell nature to mind its own business.

Keeping the Outdoors Out: Protecting Windows from Nature

Take a moment to consider from what type of nature you need to protect your home. Different issues require different solutions. Drafty, leaky windows in a cold, rainy area require a much different solution than windows might need for hurricane preparation. Here's how it breaks down from the inside out:

Improving the Glazing

There are some types of glass on the market that can really take a beating. The next time a big storm comes to town, feel safe behind your windows with upgraded glass. You may be able to reglaze your current sashes with upgraded glass or have new sashes custom made to avoid the cost of an all-out replacement.

- Tempered glass is strengthened using a special thermal or chemical process. It puts standard glass to shame, but strong glass is just the first step.
- Laminated glass. A strong laminate or resin sandwiched between two or more panes of tempered glass gives you strength that can stop a bullet — or your neighbor's mailbox when the wind storm sends it flying, post and all, at your living room window. Afterwards, you might not be able to see through the window, but it should still be in place, protecting you and your home.
- Adding a protective film. There are protective polyester films on the market that can upgrade a single-pane window to the point that it'll stand up to a crowbar when properly installed. At the very least, a protective film keeps the glass together, not covering the inside of your home with shards of broken glass.

Storm Windows

Storm windows are an entire extra set of windows that go over (or mount inside) your current windows. They can be temporary or permanently installed, and they come in a wide variety of shapes and types to maximize your ability to use your regular windows — or seal them up for winter. They aren't the best for insulation due to the drain or weep holes (or simply unsealed bottom) that allows excess water to drain out, but they stop most drafts and precipitation.

Beyond Glass: Additional Levels of Protection

If replacing your windows outright isn't an option, but you need more than a film can offer, it's time to consider external upgrades:

- Screens. At their most basic, window screens keep out bugs and offer minimal weather protection. Upgrade to metal screens to stop flying debris, solar screens to cut down on sunlight in hot climates or privacy screens if you need a breeze in the house and you want to enjoy it without too many clothes on.
- Storm shutters. Your best bet for protecting your windows during a major storm is covering them with big, hefty shutters (hurricane glass might survive the flying objects, but once it's cracked you'll need to replace it — or deal with a window you can't see through). You can choose from options like:
 - Storm panels: These are relatively inexpensive steel or aluminum panels that typically go up in overlapping pieces and fit into a permanently installed track or other mounting hardware.
 - Accordion shutters: These permanent shutters sit next to your windows, ready to go. Some come with keyed locks for extra security to boot.
 - Colonial shutters: These are the classic shutters that everyone thinks of. They sit on either side of a window, permanently installed and ready to swing together to cover up — albeit sometimes with a special storm bar added to keep them closed.
 - Bahama shutters: These single-piece units prop up to provide shade and drop down and lock into place to protect during a storm — quick and easy.
 - Roll-down shutters: Just hit a button and these roll metal plating down into place over your windows. They're effective, secure, super easy and the most expensive option.



Sealing and Winterizing

Whatever extra protection you decide on, it's important to weatherstrip and seal up all windows to prevent your climate-controlled air from slipping outside. In colder climates, you can seal windows shut with removable caulk or tape clear plastic sheeting over them, hit with a hair dryer to get out wrinkles and then have an air-tight barrier around your regular window. Your windows should let in light and nice breezes on your terms, not nature's. Protect them well, and they'll serve you for years to come.



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