

"The functional use and design possibilities of sunrooms has changed significantly for the better over the past few years," agrees Ann Mooney of Marvin Architectural. Whereas in the past it may have been a question of identifying a sunny spot at the back of the house and constructing a lean-to in the cheapest materials available. Nowadays, the sunroom is conceived as part of the existing house and as an opportunity to accommodate a family's changing lifestyle.

Mooney, like many others in this niche area believe that this may come from a need to extend the kitchen into a dining or family room to accommodate the requirements of a growing family or perhaps a desire to link the garden with the interior space. Don't be surprised if this new space becomes the favourite space to be in the house. "More and more homeowners are using daring and dramatic design to frame views, capture skyline and enhance the quality of natural light," Mooney outlines.

An exciting development in extensions and there is unlimited choice when it comes to glazing products from sliding, outswing and inswing French doors to eight panel 16-foot wide bi-fold doors, a popular option for suburban gardens where space is at a premium. Providing a garden room is also an opportunity to bring natural light into a house that was originally built when this was not a consideration. Even when a house may have adequate space, it may lack a dramatic architectural feature

## ALONE IT *Stands*



Garden pavilion from Sterrin O'Shea

and so this should be seen as an opportunity to introduce this element. The conservatory – as in a glazed roof – has also given way to a sunroom, which provides a year-round space that is still usable and welcoming even on the coldest winter days.

Those in the industry report a return to wood as the favoured material for windows and doors, especially as they are available now with a maintenance-free exterior. Another factor is the cold impersonal feeling created by materials such as PVC being "too uncomfortable to live with and can make you feel like you are in a car showroom," as one source puts it.

While very basic window and door units continue to be available off the shelf, lack of investment in quality material will always reflect badly in the finished project. The wise thing to do is invest in the best product you can afford. Essentially a sunroom or garden room comprises of combinations of windows and doors and there is a u-factor – the measure of heat loss – available on all window products. It is important to have a realistic budget put aside for it. It is also advisable to talk to an architect about your idea as their input will invariably give you a design insight that is invaluable and can ultimately result in a space that fulfills all your lifestyle needs.

### ALONE IT STANDS

A standalone garden room can provide an ancillary function to the house, O'Sullivan says. A big driver for their popularity, he observes, is the trend towards home working, whether it's for a few hours or full time. "Having a dedicated space makes a huge difference," he remarks. Another factor in the provision of separate spaces is that young people aren't as keen to burst forth from the comfort of the family home as in the past. There can be three, four or five adults at home, causing pressure on domestic space. Adult children can have somewhere to listen to music or play computer games while still being on the property. ▶

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