



CLOSE TO NATURE – With a wall of windows at your cabin, you can experience living within nature both outside and inside!

Photo by the author

Light & Air

Expert tips for selecting and placing windows

When designing a cabin, I like to include an ample number of windows to catch the morning light over here and to frame a sunset over there. I also consider airflow, where to catch the breeze and where to hear the loons. As many windows as I specify for these cabins, I have never had a client

ask me to eliminate one, but I have had clients ask for a few more.

Building codes in most areas require a minimum of window square footage equal to 10% of living area. At least 50% of that should be operable for ventilation. All bedrooms require an egress window of 6 square feet and no more than 44 inches of height off the floor so firefighters can squeeze through to save a life if necessary.

We all select our cabin sites due to special natural features like a lake, stream,

meadow, forest or mountain, etc.

Windows help us experience these settings while still protecting us from rain, insects and the cold.

Window walls allow nature to invade our inner world, and a picture window can literally frame nature on our wall.

Open a window and the scent of pine needles drifts in.

Sit behind a window in the sun on a cool, fall day and doze in its glow.

Selecting windows

Windows should be selected for their application to a particular situation.

Horizontal window assemblies are best for broad lake views, whereas vertical windows are best for mountaintops.

East windows wake us in the morning so we can start our day of cabin fun, and northern light is preferred for artists' studios. Windows at a lower height can induce us to sit down at a table, and windows on opposite sides of a room can facilitate cross ventilation.

EDITOR'S NOTE

We are excited to introduce this new column by architect, book author and cabinologist Dale Mulfinger, FAIA. Look for it in every issue of *Cabin Life*.

definition Sash: A unit of glass with a frame around it.

In the Midwest where I live and practice, I'm in the middle of window world. There are at least a dozen window production companies within the region. From the thickness of their many catalogs, I gather that people cherish a rich variety of window choices. Yet window selection can be categorized into three basic types:

Fixed Windows: Where ventilation is unnecessary, fixed sash units are the most practical option. They are available in the widest variety of sizes and shapes, including trapezoids to match your roof pitch. They can be ganged with operable windows either above, below or adjacent.

Swinging Sash: Single-sash windows can be hinged at the top (awning style) or along the side (casement style) and each swings to the outside. Screens are mounted on the inside, and are removable for cleaning.

Sliding Sash: Multiple sash windows can be built in a frame to slide either vertically (double-hung) or horizontally (gliders). Screens are on the outside and the sash can be flipped inward for easy cleaning.

I often design cabins in buggy locations and thus utilize many double-hung windows. These tend to fit a more traditional style of cottage or cabin. A few concerns to be aware of for double-hung windows are the large size necessary to meet egress in bedrooms, the location of the check rail where upper and lower sash meet so as to not intersect viewing, and the difficulty some people may have lifting up the bottom sash when the window is, for instance, beyond the kitchen sink.

A special double-hung window, the cottage style, works particularly well in rooms with lake views. Rather than the normally equal sash sizes, it has a $\frac{2}{3}$ upper sash and a $\frac{1}{3}$ lower sash. When the window is set at normal height, the upper sash accommodates viewing while walking through a room and the lower sash works for viewing heights from either a dining chair or a sofa. The lower sash bottoms out with its glass 18 inches above the floor, below which you would need more expensive tempered glass. (This adds to the cost, but rarely to your view.)

Window placement

Although the energy performance of windows has vastly improved, it is still

often substantially less than an insulated wall built to code. So windows should be strategically located depending on the solar angle at your site, for passive solar gain in northern sites and solar protection in southern building sites.

Roof overhangs can be explored at southern orientations for seasonal variations in solar access, but do little to protect cabin interiors from solar or heat gain when windows are oriented toward the western sun for sunset viewing. The heat



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Photo by the author

BENEFITS GALORE –

(Top) Modern casement windows swing out into the fresh air with a screen on the inside. (Above) Storefront sash was used to create this window wall opening into a forest glen. (Left) Cottage-style double-hung windows are employed in this cabin's southeast and southwest exposures for passive solar gain.

MOUNTAIN BEAUTY –

This Utah retreat takes advantage of the beautiful views of the mountains nearby with ample large windows. A dark brown color was chosen for the window frames to blend the windows into the retreat's timber framing.



Photo courtesy H Window Company

gain problem is best addressed by exterior shutters or tinted glass.

I design many cabins above the 45th parallel in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Montana, where

excess cold can trump excess heat. My cabin near the Canadian border is tucked into a northwest rock ledge and opens with lots of glass to the southeast and southwest. We enjoy considerable passive solar gain in winter months.

Trying to capture northern views with windows in northern climates can be challenging due to excess heat loss. Framing the view rather precisely and reducing window sizes are the most practical solutions, along with the use of triple glazing.

I am a fan of the particular strategy of placing a window to create a small splash of light where least expected, or framing an intimate view for a special experience. The architect Edwin Lundie located a small 18x18-inch window for viewing out

of only after one lays their head down on a pillow. I often place a 12x12-inch window in a kitchen between lower and upper cabinets. My colleagues and a few clients often refer to this as the “Dale window,” wondering where I will park it in the next project.

Symmetry is an aesthetic device commonly understood for the location of windows. Occasionally this presents challenges when negotiating between the symmetry of an exterior facade or the symmetry within a room.

Asymmetry can liberate designs; playfully locating windows at unexpected heights adds to the casual experience of a cabin. Above all, whether working with your architect, cabin designer or on your own CAD program, have fun and enjoy the

light, view and ventilation that windows can provide. ■

Anointed “cabinologist” by a Minnesota radio personality, Dale Mulfinger regularly designs cabins with SALA Architects, teaches cabin courses and gives talks on cabin subjects across North America. He has authored five books: “The Architecture of Edwin Lundie,” “The Cabin,” “The Getaway Home,” “Cabinology” and “Back to the Cabin.”



RESOURCES

See more of Dale’s magazine articles at www.CabinLife.com, and see more of his architecture at www.salaarc.com.



CUSTOMIZE – Today, you have options! Pick your color or create your color for exterior window frames.

CHOICES, CHOICES

WINDOWS ARE AVAILABLE with low-maintenance exteriors of metal, vinyl or unique composites.

If you shop around, you’ll find a wide variety of colors. While most companies carry the standard colors of bronze, white and beige, the Andersen Windows’ E-Series offers 50 colors at no upcharge (I’m partial to Stormy Blue).

For cabins, I’m a big fan of colors found in nature. Marvin’s Wineberry looks a lot like a sumac branch, and Kolbe’s Kiwi color resembles that of moss on birch trees. And then there’s the H Window Company. You can send in bark or leaves from your property and ask the company to match it. On my own cabin, I have two different window colors set in different exterior facades.

RESOURCES

- Andersen Windows & Doors, www.andersenwindows.com
- Marvin Windows and Doors, www.marvin.com
- Kolbe Windows & Doors, www.kolbewindows.com
- H Window Company, www.hwindow.com