



# PERFECTLY CLEAR GLASS DOORS ARE ON TREND

By CHERYL VAN TUYL JIVIDEN

Driven by homeowners' desire for open spaces, natural light and outdoor living, rooms with a view are more and more outfitted with some multiplicity of glass doors. Thanks to technology, consumers have more choices than ever before that combine aesthetic and function.

While large floor-to-ceiling windows are nothing new, glass doors take the idea into an interactive modernity adding expanses of light and space. Stacking doors — when opened, all panels can stack, hiding behind just one — allow maximum access, and make the best of the outdoors year round. Independently moving panels offer one of the greatest flexibilities.

One of the most appealing characteristics is the abundant light available through glass doors. Additionally, the ability to integrate outdoor spaces into home interiors allows easy ac-

cess to the outdoors for entertainment or personal use, and also the enjoyment of fresh air and climate. Sean Miller of Martel Windows and Doors agrees, saying, "Our customers have been requesting large folding, pocketing and stacking door systems due to the ability to get large openings to create indoor/outdoor spaces as well as to capture light in their interior spaces through the walls of glass these door systems provide. They have quickly become the statement piece in a home that every new homeowner or client remodeling their existing home wants."

Chris Guido, president of Guido Doors, Windows and Millwork, says hot Texas summers should not be a concern for homeowners. "That is often people's first reaction, but the reality is it only really starts to get hot here in mid/late June to mid/late September. So for most of the other nine months out of the year, South Texas is generally a very mild climate. There are so many days in December, January and February that have high temperature days in the 60s to 80s. Virtually all of October, November, March, April and May are that way. I would argue outside of Southern California, South Texas has an excellent climate for these doors, without the humidity."

When choosing a door system for your home, the options are almost endless. Wells Mason, Design Manager for the new BMC Design Center in Austin says, "Our sliding door systems and our folding door systems are hugely popular. People are interested in blurring the line between indoors and outdoors, and they can do this with high-performing glass door systems. People like the idea of a massive sliding door that pockets into a wall — or a folding door that accordions open. It's high theater."

BMC offers a wide range of manufacturers and styles at their multiple Texas locations, and Mason believes it isn't just about aesthetics. "The folding doors are efficient compared to other door systems. The hardware is designed for ease of use, security and a lifetime of performance, and the weather seals and glass are energy efficient. Plus, there are lots of great options with our folding door systems, including fiberglass options, aluminum clad options, different wood species and different glass options. We even have several threshold options depending on the individual requirements of the customer."

Panoramic Doors' revolutionary Folding Patio Door allows panels to move independently of each other, free from hinges affording more freedom, easier operation and total control of the opening. On a hinged-system, they can be opened in a variety of configurations.

Function is important, but it has to fit the room's style. Miller says of the many options, there are favorites. "The styles that are most popular are dark colored frames with narrow sightlines so that the most amount of glass is used and there is minimal obstruction of view." Mike Feeley with Panoramic Doors says there are style and fabrication choices. "We offer finishes in vinyl, a variety of wood choices including luxurious real wood cladding and over 200 paint colors and custom matching for aluminum."

When closed, glass door products provide climate control without compromising the view or natural light, and many fine manufacturers are Energy Star® rated and/or Green Seal certified to help insure cost savings and energy conservation.

So how do these compare in cost to other glass wall systems? Guido says, "They are generally more expensive because of the size and the hardware needed to make large systems move smoothly. Of course, installation is everything with these systems."

Slide, fold, stack or pocket — the reason to pick glass doors are perfectly clear and ideal for any home style.

## CHRIS GUIDO PROVIDES IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS WHEN BUYING GLASS DOORS:

**Easy Movement** — Folding doors are heavy, so the rolling system needs to operate smoothly at all times. Flat wheels that absorb deflections running on a flat surface will work better than grooved wheels on rails to ensure free movement regardless of the door position. Always try before you buy!

**Strength** — Because folding doors need to withstand all sorts of pressures, both when closed and when moving, the panel profiles (vertical "stiles" and horizontal "rails") that hold the glass in place need to be strong. But you will also want narrow sight lines, which are more aesthetically pleasing. Therefore, look for stile and rail profiles that are thicker in depth but still narrow when viewed front-on — this gives the required stability and robustness while also maximizing the glass area.

**Appearance** — Aluminum folding doors can be powder coated in a wide variety of colors and textures to suit your particular preferences. If painted white, they give a consistent appearance with PVC windows. Timber gives an added texture and warmth, and with the correct stain or color can provide a contemporary look, but will require regular maintenance.

**Weather Resistance** — Because folding doors are much larger than ordinary patio doors, they are more susceptible to the effects of wind and rain. While 100pa water resistance is suitable for sheltered spaces, 250pa+ is advisable for doors that are unprotected from the elements. ❖

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