

## A Low-Cost Way to Stay Cool

By Sustainable Belmont

When hot weather approaches, most people instinctively turn to air conditioning to stay cool. But with the cost of electricity—and the environmental impacts associated with conventional electricity generation—on the rise, blasting the AC might not feel as refreshing anymore. Fortunately, there is a way to keep cool without breaking the bank: a "whole house" exhaust fan.

A whole house fan works by moving a large volume of heated air out of your house (typically through the attic) while drawing in cooler outdoor air through your home's windows; its powerful motor can exhaust all the hot air in the house in as little as 15 minutes. These fans are generally used in the later evening, when temperatures have dropped and the air is cooler outside than inside. On very warm nights, a fan can be used all night long and then shut off the next morning before the outside air heats up, retaining cool air inside the house. If you choose to use air conditioning at night, a whole house fan can reduce your cooling costs because the air conditioner doesn't have to work as hard to reach the desired temperature.

Compared with the total cost of air conditioning, a whole house fan is a bargain. A fan can cost from \$300 to \$1,000 depending on the number of cubic feet of air you need to move and the installation work required. Its 1/4- to 1/2-horsepower motor costs about three to five cents an hour to run (at least 75 percent less than the cost to run an air conditioner). You can buy a whole house fan at the hardware store and install it yourself, or you can consult an HVAC (heating, ventilating, and air conditioning) engineer who can help you choose and install the correct unit.

To learn more about energy-saving tips, contact Sustainable Belmont at [sustainablebelmont@gmail.com](mailto:sustainablebelmont@gmail.com).