

How To Choose Your New Brick Exterior

(HIT)—Home buyers this fall deciding on brick for their new home's exterior will discover increasing options in variety, textures and colors at every price point.

Many home buyers choose brick because they want an attractive, low-

maintenance exterior that adds quality and value. They also want the opportunity to personalize the look through decorative arches, custom windowsills and raised corners.

"Like many products in the home building industry, the brick manufactur-

ing process has benefited from technology," said Tom Perry, vice president marketing, the Brick Industry Association (BIA), Reston, Va. "New manufacturing techniques have created a wider range of looks, textures and colors. As a result, the prices now also run a broader range."

Although a production builder will likely offer a limited brick selection that will be packaged with other trim and detail features—such as matching brick and shutter styles—home buyers may be able to mix and match various options to achieve a unique look. With a custom builder, brick selection should only be limited by a buyer's imagination and budget.

The seven steps below will help home buyers make the right choice when choosing their brick:

- **Understand Your Options:** Most brick purchased in the U.S. is extruded, or forced through a rectangular die then sliced into individual bricks. Manufacturing efficiencies have made this both the lowest cost brick and added new textures. Machine-molded antiques offer the look of handmade brick, but at a lower cost. Antiques are increasingly chosen by custom builders to save on exteriors without sacrificing aesthetics. Handmade brick are pressed into wood moulds, much like the brick in colonial days. Since these kinds of brick are more unique, they cost more than extruded or other machine-made brick.
- **Understand Your Contract:** Review your contract to see what your builder allows, your options (both standard and what can be ordered), and your available budget.
- **See It All At Your Brick Distributor's Showroom:** Your local brick distributor can show you hundreds of sample brick panels, color photographs of the lines it carries, how mortar can change the look of your brick, and direct you to actual sample houses.
- **Don't Forget the Mortar:** Mortar makes up 20 percent of a brick wall,

and comes in different colors and shades. A minor change in mortar color could dramatically change the look of your house. Many home buyers are now matching the mortar to the brick for a monochromatic, seamless look. Some distributors offer computer or Web-based program that show how different color mortars will look.

- **Roof, Shutters and Trim Create the Total Package:** The type and color of your roof shingles and window shutters will also have a dramatic effect on the look of your house. Again, where possible, use computer or Web-based programs that allow you to mix and match roof and shutter options to determine the finished look of your house.
- **Don't Forget the Details:** Custom

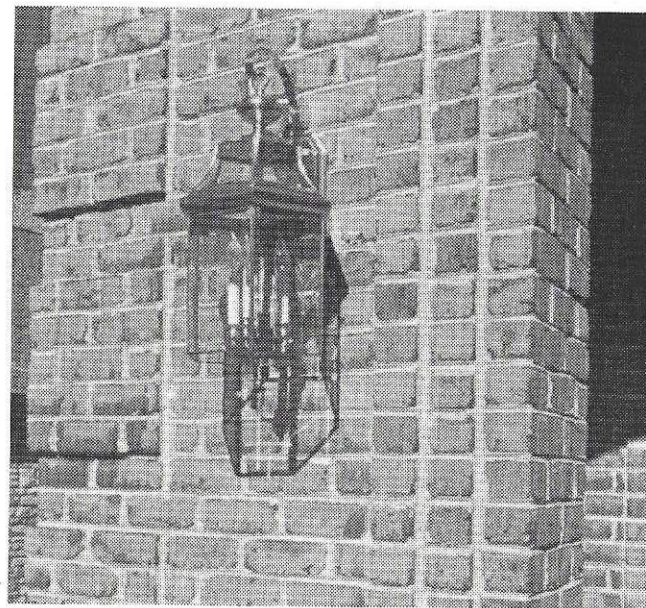
arches and windowsills can personalize the look of your home. Custom brick detailing comes in several varieties—from projecting the brickwork on the corners of your home (known as the "quin corners"), to installing artistic brick designs above doorways or in other locations of your house. Be sure to discuss these options with your distributor and builder or mason.

- **Research Your Mason Contractor:** If using a custom builder, review past work that the recommended mason contractor has completed.

For more information on selecting brick, contact your local brick distributor or visit the Brick Industry Association (BIA) Web site at www.brickinfo.org for a list of distributors in your state and additional tips.



Machine-made tumbled brick offers interesting color blends for both traditional and contemporary designs. Shown: Old Colonial Used Brick, Acme Brick Company.



Machine-moulded antiques offer the look of colonial, handmade brick at a lower cost. Shown: #40 Santa Fe Antique O/S (oversized), Redland Brick, Inc., Cushwa Division.