Home Zone: Don't let ugly grilles grate on you

by Linda Pescatore

Have you got an ugly stamped-metal grille covering your air vents? Flimsy metal slats can get scraped and bent, sometimes bowing or drooping, and they are difficult to keep clean. And since they require central, unobstructed locations, those beat-up grilles are hard to miss.

Metal grilles can easily be replaced with more stylish wooden ones that can be painted to match your wall or ceiling trim, and they will retain their finish just like any other trim in your house, according to manufacturer Worth Home Products

And they work just as well, if not better, than standard metal grilles, the company says. In fact, because they are engineered and tested to ensure maximum airflow, the company's many standard sizes also perform better than site-built grilles, according to Worth. (Special orders are also available for hard-to-fit openings.)

GRILLE OF YOUR DREAMS - Battered stamped-metal return-air grilles can be replaces with less obtrusive wood grilles, engineered for maximum airflow by Worth Home Products. The grilles attach to the wall without visible screws or latches, thanks to a patent-pending design that installs quickly and opens easily when service is needed. CNS Photo courtesy of Worth Home Products. RALLY 'ROUND THE FLAGPOLE - Displaying your patriotism is easy with a maintenance-free telescoping flagpole that eliminates fraying ropes, endless pulleys and clanging hardware. CNS Photo courtesy of SunSetter Products.The grilles have two parts: a 26-gauge metal frame that fits most duct openings and holds a standard 1-inch filter, and a New Zealand pine grille with a Baltic birch frame, both can be ordered primed and ready to paint. The pine is selected for its flexibility, to prevent the slats from breaking when bumped, and the birch is used for its strength, to keep the frame from warping.

The products use a proprietary design to hold the grille securely to the wall or ceiling without visible screws or latches. But that doesn't mean wooden grilles are tricky to install; the company lists only four steps. And the grilles open easily for cleaning, filter replacement or duct inspection.

Worth's grilles are the only wooden return air grilles accepted into the national parts programs of leading manufacturers, including Carrier, Rheem/Ruud and Amana/Goodman, according to spokeswoman Lori

Machiorlette.

Prices are $57-$119 for standard sizes. For more information visit www.worthhomeproducts.com or call 866-384-9400.

RUN THIS UP THE FLAGPOLE

With patriotic holidays like President's Day, Memorial Day and Independence Day just around the proverbial corner, now is a good time to buy or replace a flagpole - especially if you're dealing with fraying rope, clanging hardware or a rusty pole.

The latest flagpoles eliminate these problems while also making it much easier to attach and raise a flag, because they do not use ropes and pulleys. Instead, the flag attaches to stainless steel clips when the flagpole is collapsed to an easy-to-reach height; once secure, the pole telescopes to 20 feet high. The freely rotating clips allow the flag to fly tangle-free in the wind. You can also fly two flags or fly one at flag half-staff.

The strong but lightweight aluminum pole sections slide up and down smoothly because there is little friction between them, allowing just about anyone to operate them with ease, according to SunSetter Products, makers of the SunSetter Telescoping Flagpole, the only flagpole that has earned the Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval.

SunSetter's pole uses exclusive, patented technology to lock the sections in place automatically when extended. A child-resistant collar prevents the pole from unintended collapsing, and a lock prevents theft and vandalism. When you're ready to take the flag down for storage, a release button safely collapses the pole in seconds.

SunSetter's flagpole comes in three finishes - anodized aluminum, anodized bronze and white baked enamel. The unit installs quickly and, like many telescoping flagpoles, SunSetter's model is portable, allowing you to bring it along to a vacation home or even to a campsite, using a stand that anchors the flagpole using the wheels of your recreational vehicle.

The 16-gauge aluminum is maintenance-free; it never rusts and never needs painting, according to SunSetter, which offers a five-year warranty.

The factory-direct price is $165 for the 20-foot flagpole, $60 for a 6-foot, non-telescoping, wall-mounted model. Both come with an American flag. For more information call 800-876-2340 or visit www.sunsetterflagpole.com.

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