

ressing

ou're looking to let the light flood in or block it out, blinds, curtains and shutters will frame your panes in style

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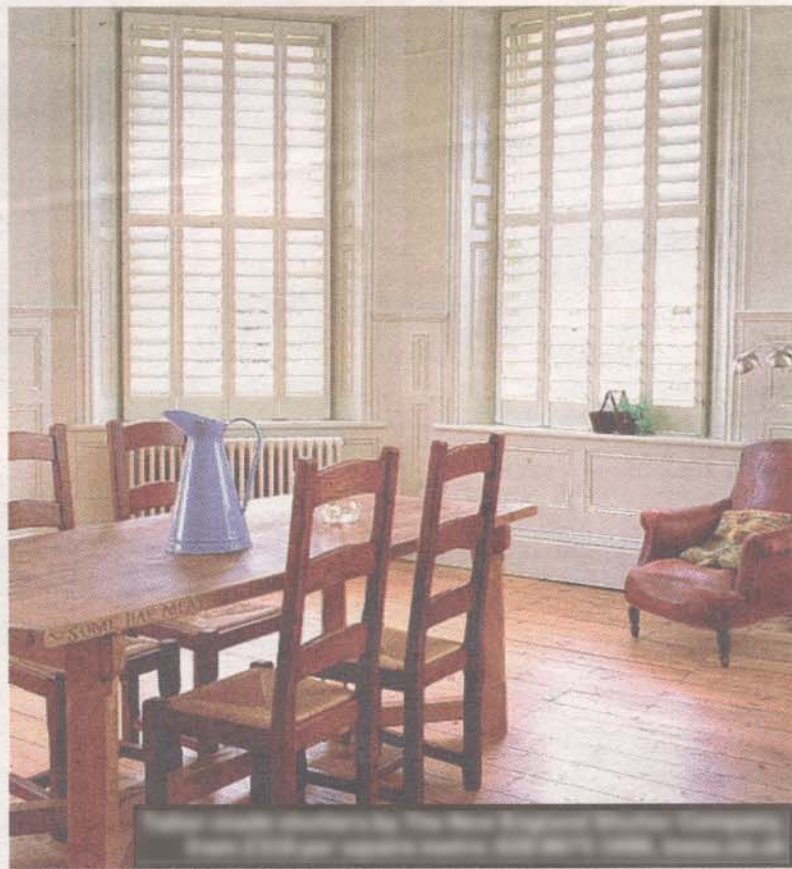


**KATRINA
BURROUGHS**

**VOILES OR SHEERS
— CALL THEM
ANYTHING BUT
NET CURTAINS
— ARE MAKING
A BIG COMEBACK**

As a fresh, airy alternative to drapes, plantation shutters — with slatted, not solid, panels — are proving popular. Nick Garratt, managing director of The New England Shutter Company, says orders for his hardwood shutters have tripled in the past five years. "People have been consistently moving over from curtains to shutters, especially in urban areas," he says.

Garratt suggests café-style half-height shutters as an ideal choice for terraced houses that have windows facing onto the street and whose occupants want both privacy and daylight. His bestsellers are in white-painted American tulip wood. Prices start at £310 per square metre; the average cost



and faux suede, in tones ranging from cream to plum; prices start at £787 per square metre.

New for the bathroom and kitchen are acrylic shutters. American Shutters has just launched frosted-look panels made of Parapan, a high-tech waterproof acrylic that allows the subtle glow of daylight to filter through. Prices start at £310 per square metre (01628 586986, americanshutters.co.uk).

Although window makeovers are pricey, there are some cheap tricks and quick fixes. Argos has pretty bamboo roll-up blinds, perfect for bathrooms, for less than a fiver (120cm by 160cm, £4.89; argos.co.uk). B&Q also sells a selection of inexpensive blinds: a roller

cotton Embroidered Lawn Leaf and Embroidered Lawn Fern (both £17.50 per metre, in white or natural; 020 7722 0997, ianmankinonline.co.uk).

Celia Birtwell, the illustrious textile designer, is another longtime fan of voiles. Her store in Notting Hill, west London, has the most inspiring range, to which she has been adding since the late 1980s. She reports with delight a recent spike in sales of sheers, as they acquire a whole new generation of devotees. "The white-on-white printed voiles have been the biggest success," she says. Opera Star is the easiest to use — it's a repeat pattern of a tiny little star. Prices start at £24 per metre (020 7221 0877, celiabirtwell.com).