



MADE FOR LIFE UNDER THE SUN



Before You Buy Shade

A Buying Guide for Shades

Designed for the general public

How to decide whether you need an outdoor structure, which type suits your property, what it is reasonable to spend — and what to ask before you sign anything.

AWNINGS · PERGOLAS · CAR PARKING SHADES · TENSILE SHADES · TENTS

**ZIL**

SHADES

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BEFORE YOU BUY SHADE

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What is in this guide

It takes about fifteen minutes to read. You can also use it as a reference — each part answers a different question, in the order most people need to answer them.

A NOTE ON WHAT IS NOT IN THIS GUIDE

No prices, and no approval rules. What a structure costs depends on its size, your site and how it is built; requirements vary depending on your property, community, landlord, property management and applicable local regulations. This guide tells you how to decide what yours is worth spending on, and what to check with whom. It is not legal or regulatory advice.

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Should you build anything at all?

A shade structure is not really a product. It is a change to the way part of your property behaves.

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01 Start with the right question

Most people begin the same way. “I want a shade for the back garden.” It is a reasonable place to start, and it is also the reason a lot of money gets spent on structures that never quite work.

A shade structure is not really a product. It is a change to the way part of your property behaves — whether you can sit outside at four in the afternoon, whether the car is bearable to get into at two, whether the room behind the glass door stays cool enough to use.

So the first question is not “which shade should I buy?” It is **“what am I trying to change, and is a structure the right way to change it?”**

This guide is written to help you answer that honestly — whether to buy, what to buy, when to buy, and when the sensible answer is to wait.

THINK ABOUT THIS

Nobody has regretted asking one more question before signing. A good supplier will not mind. A supplier who does mind has told you something useful.

02 What are you actually trying to improve?

Almost every enquiry traces back to one of a handful of real problems. Finding yours tells you where the structure should go — often not where you first pictured it — and gives you a way to judge, a year later, whether the money worked.

WHAT YOU FEEL	WHAT IT USUALLY IS	WORTH THINKING ABOUT
“The garden is unusable from ten until five.”	Direct sun on a surface that stores heat all day.	Which part do you actually sit in? Shading the seating area well often beats shading everything thinly.
“Getting into the car is unbearable, and the paint is suffering.”	Sustained sun and heat on parked vehicles.	Height, orientation and where the columns land matter more than total area. Measure how you really park.

WHAT YOU FEEL	WHAT IT USUALLY IS	WORTH THINKING ABOUT
"The living room is too hot in the afternoon."	Heat coming through glazing, not from the garden.	An awning over the window may solve more than a structure in the middle of the garden.
"We have nowhere to sit guests outside."	A missing room, rather than a heat problem.	You are creating a defined space. Furniture, lighting and floor may matter as much as the roof.
"Rain and dust reach the entrance / the furniture."	Exposure at a specific point.	Small, well-placed cover can outperform something large and general.
"The outdoor area looks unfinished."	Appearance.	This is a legitimate reason. Be honest that it is the main one — it changes what is worth spending, and where.

If more than one of these is true, rank them. The structure that solves your first problem well is almost always a better outcome than the structure that solves three of them adequately.

03 Do you own, rent or lease? Why this changes everything

This one answer changes more than any other. It decides how much of the structure's life you will actually enjoy, who has to agree to it, what happens when you leave — and therefore what it is sensible to spend.

YOUR SITUATION	WHAT YOU ARE REALLY BUYING	WHAT USUALLY MAKES SENSE
You own the property and expect to stay for many years	The full life of the structure — every summer it lasts is a summer you get.	Permanence is a reasonable investment. Design, materials, corrosion resistance and the ability to maintain it all earn their cost here.
You rent your home, with one to three years in view	Comfort for a defined period, not an improvement to an asset you keep.	Look at freestanding or removable options that could move with you — or a modest fixed solution you would be content to leave behind.

YOUR SITUATION	WHAT YOU ARE REALLY BUYING	WHAT USUALLY MAKES SENSE
You lease commercial premises	Use of the space for the lease term, plus an obligation at the end of it.	Read the alterations and reinstatement clauses before you design anything. The cost of putting the premises back is part of this project's budget, not a surprise later.
You are a landlord improving a property you let	An asset that must survive tenants and stay presentable between them.	Favour durability and easy maintenance over sophistication. Whatever needs careful handling will not get it.

BE CAREFUL WITH ONE COMMON ASSUMPTION

A freestanding structure is often simpler to remove, and agreement is sometimes easier to obtain. But freestanding does not automatically mean no permission is needed. Requirements vary depending on your property, your community, your landlord, your property management and applicable local regulations. Ask before you order, not after.

04 The three-question test: use, stay, value

Before you look at a single design, answer three questions. They take two minutes and they will shape everything that follows.

One — How often will you really use it?

Not how often you imagine using it. How often you use that space now, and how much of that is limited by sun, heat, rain or dust. A modest structure over a space you use every day is worth far more than a beautiful one over a space you visit twice a year.

Two — How long will you be there?

Roughly. And will the structure still suit you at the end of that time — as children grow, as you buy a different car, as the way you use the garden changes?

Three — What kind of value are you after?

There are two kinds. **Lifestyle value** is immediate and reliable: a space you can use, a car that is not an oven, a room that stays cooler. **Property value** is possible but not automatic —

a structure that suits the house helps it show well, while an awkward or tired one counts against it. Nobody should promise you that a shade structure will raise the price of your property. A good one can make it easier to like.

WHEN THE HONEST ANSWER IS "NOT YET"

Sometimes the right decision is to wait. That is a real answer, not a failure:

You may be moving within a year, and the structure could not come with you. You may not yet know how you will use the space — a season with movable umbrellas will teach you where the sun actually falls. Your approval position may be unclear. Or today's budget stretches only to something you already suspect will not last.

A year of knowing how you use a space produces a better structure than a year of owning the wrong one.



What kind of solution fits?

Anything that catches sun
also catches wind.

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05 Permanent, semi-permanent or relocatable?

Decide this before you choose a product type. It narrows the field faster than any other decision.

APPROACH	WHAT IT MEANS	SUITS YOU IF
Permanent, fixed	Built into the ground or fixed to the building, designed to stay.	You own the property, expect a long stay, and want the most integrated appearance and the longest life.
Semi-permanent	Solidly fixed, but designed so it can be dismantled — bolted bases and mechanical fixings rather than anything irreversible.	You want durability but would like the option to remove or reconfigure it later without damage.
Freestanding and relocatable	Supported by its own frame, weights or ground anchors rather than by your building.	You rent, you may move, or you would rather not fix into the villa at all.

One honest engineering point, in plain terms: **anything that catches sun also catches wind.** Freestanding does not mean weightless — it means the resistance is designed differently, through the frame, ballast or anchoring. That is a question for whoever builds it, not for you. But it is a fair one to ask.

06 A plain guide to the five common structures

This is not a catalogue. It is enough to let you follow the conversation and ask sensible questions.

Awnings

A fabric cover extending out from a wall, fixed or retractable. The natural answer when the problem is at the building — sun on glazing, a terrace beside the house, a café frontage, a balcony. Retractable versions let you choose when you have shade, useful in a region with mild winters; they also add moving parts worth keeping clean. An awning depends on a sound wall to fix to, so the wall is part of the design.

Pergolas

A framed structure with a roof — open slats, adjustable louvres, or a solid or fabric infill. A pergola creates an outdoor room rather than simply covering one. Open slats give dappled shade but do not keep rain out; louvred and solid systems do more and cost more. They can be fixed or freestanding, which makes them one of the more flexible options if you rent.

Car parking shades

Structures over parking, cantilevered from one side or supported on columns. The most-used structure most people ever buy, because it works every single day. The details that matter are less obvious than the size: height, where the columns land, how you actually reverse in, and where water goes when it rains.

Tensile shades

Fabric stretched into a curved shape between masts and anchor points. They cover larger areas elegantly and are the usual answer where appearance matters as much as coverage. The curve is structural, not decorative — it is what makes the fabric stable — so this is the category where proper engineering is least optional.

Tents (A-frame and similar)

Relocatable covered space, erected for a period and taken down again. Right for events, seasonal use, storage and genuinely temporary requirements. Wrong as a substitute for a permanent structure you will need every day for ten years.

TYPE	BEST SUITED TO	USUAL PERMANENCE	RAIN PROTECTION	WATCH
Awning	Windows, doors, terraces, frontage	Fixed to building	Good when fixed; retractables must be closed in wind	Wall condition and fixing method
Pergola	Creating a defined outdoor room	Fixed or freestanding	Depends entirely on the roof type	Slatted roofs are not rain cover
Car parking shade	Vehicle protection, daily use	Usually permanent	Good	Height, column positions, drainage

TYPE	BEST SUITED TO	USUAL PERMANENCE	RAIN PROTECTION	WATCH
Tensile shade	Larger areas where appearance matters	Permanent	Good, if drainage is designed	Needs engineering and anchor space
Tent	Events, seasonal and temporary needs	Relocatable	Good for the period in use	Storage and re-erection between uses

07 Matching the structure to your situation

A starting point, not a prescription. Your site may point elsewhere, and that is exactly what a proper assessment is for.

IF THIS IS YOU	USUALLY WORTH LOOKING AT FIRST	THE ONE THING TO CHECK
Renting a villa, two years in view, garden too hot to use	Freestanding pergola, or a good-quality relocatable shade	Your landlord's written agreement, and what is expected of you at move-out
Own the villa, long stay, cars in the sun	Fixed car parking shade	Height and column positions against how you actually park; where rainwater will go
Living room overheating in the afternoon	Awning or fixed canopy over the glazing	The wall you are fixing into, and how far the cover needs to project
Café or shop frontage on a leased unit	Retractable awning, or freestanding cover on the terrace	Community, landlord and signage rules — and what you do with a retractable in strong wind
Large open area, appearance matters	Tensile shade	That it is properly engineered, and that there is room for the anchor points the shape needs
Occasional events or seasonal need	Tent or other relocatable cover	Where it lives between uses, and who puts it up

IF THIS IS YOU	USUALLY WORTH LOOKING AT FIRST	THE ONE THING TO CHECK
A school, nursery or public-facing space	Engineered shade with documentation	That safety, fixings and maintenance are specified in writing, not assumed

08 Approvals, landlords and community rules — and why they care

Before you order anything, check three places: your own title or lease, particularly any clause about alterations; your community or property management rules; and any local requirements that apply to your property. Requirements vary, so ask about your case specifically — and get the answer in writing. It costs a week. Reversing a structure that should not have been built costs a great deal more.

Why they ask

It helps to see this from the other side. A property manager who has watched one badly built structure come loose in a summer storm is not being difficult. The usual concerns are reasonable ones:

- **Wind.** A shade is a sail. A poorly restrained one becomes a hazard to more than its owner.
- **Fixings.** Anything bolted into a building affects that building — waterproofing, structure and the neighbour on the other side of the wall.
- **Water.** A new roof over a garden sends rain somewhere it did not go before.
- **Fire, access and services.** Cover placed over the wrong route can matter a great deal on the one day it matters.
- **Appearance and consistency.** Communities are sold partly on how coherent they look, and they are within their rights to protect it.
- **Maintenance and liability.** They are thinking about how this looks in year six, and who is answerable if it fails.

A PRACTICAL TIP

An approval request supported by a drawing, a fixing detail and a clear description is usually answered faster than a photograph and a price. That is not bureaucracy — it is simply the information somebody needs in order to be able to say yes.



How much should this cost you?

The right budget is the one that matches the use and the life you expect.

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09 How much should you spend?

There is a tempting way to answer this: find out what a neighbour paid. It is also the least useful, because their site, their needs and their timeline are not yours.

A better method is to set the budget from two numbers you already know — **how much you will use it, and how long you need it to last.**

YOUR HORIZON	WHAT TO PRIORITISE	WHAT NOT TO PAY FOR
Short term — under about two years, rented, or genuinely uncertain	Flexibility, ease of removal, something that can move with you, practicality over appearance	A twenty-year life you will not be there to use
Medium term — roughly three to seven years	A balance of durability, appearance and adaptability. Things that can be repaired rather than replaced	Complexity you will not use, or finishes that need constant attention
Long term — you own it and expect eight years or more	Structural quality, corrosion resistance, maintainability, replaceable components, a design you will still like	Decoration that adds cost without adding life or usefulness

BUY FOR YOUR SITUATION, NOT FOR SOMEONE ELSE'S

The right budget is the one that matches the use and the life you expect — not the largest figure you can find, and not the smallest one on the market. Spending heavily on a property you are leaving is a waste. So is buying a two-year structure for a fifteen-year need and paying for it twice.

10 Initial cost versus long-term value

Two quotations for “a six by four metre shade” can describe genuinely different things. Most of what differs is invisible in the price line:

- The fabric — its grade, and how it is expected to behave under this sun rather than a milder one
- The steel — section sizes, and whether it is galvanised or painted

- How it is fixed, and what it is fixed into
- Whether foundations are included, and what happens if the ground is not what everyone assumed
- Where the water goes
- The warranty — its length, what it actually covers, and who honours it
- Whether the fabric can be replaced later without rebuilding the frame

None of this means a cheaper structure is unsafe or poor. A simpler, lighter, less expensive solution can be exactly the right choice — for a short-term need, for a space you use occasionally, for a property you will leave. It is a poor bargain only when it is bought for a job it was never designed to do.

So stop comparing numbers and start comparing scopes. Ask each supplier the same thing: what is included, what is excluded, and what happens if the site needs more work than expected.

11 What to look for beyond appearance

Everything looks good in month one. These are the things that show themselves in year three:

- **Water.** Where does rain go, and is that somewhere you are happy for it to go?
- **Fixings and fittings.** Are they appropriate for the environment — dust everywhere, salt air near the coast, real heat everywhere?
- **Replaceability.** Can the fabric be changed without dismantling the structure? Can a single component be replaced, or only the whole assembly?
- **Documentation.** Is there a record of what was installed — drawings, materials, fixing details? In five years, this is what makes a repair straightforward rather than a puzzle.
- **Availability.** Will the parts and materials still be obtainable, or is this a one-off assembly nobody can match later?

You do not need to understand the engineering to ask these. You only need to notice whether the person answering finds the questions welcome or inconvenient.



After the installation, and choosing who does it

What becomes expensive is neglect — and the most common reason for neglect is not cost. It is that nobody was ever sure who to call.

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12 Why installation is not the end of the story

An outdoor structure here lives in a demanding place: long months above forty degrees, strong ultraviolet light, dust in every joint, humidity near the coast, the occasional serious wind. That is not a warning — it is the condition the structure is designed for, and it is why an outdoor asset here needs more attention than the same thing in a mild climate.

Most of that attention is small and inexpensive: cleaning, re-tensioning fabric that has relaxed, checking fixings and cables, dealing with a minor repair while it is still minor. What becomes expensive is neglect — and the most common reason for neglect is not cost. It is that nobody was ever sure who to call.

THE QUESTION MOST BUYERS FORGET

“Who do I call in year three?”

Ask it before you buy, not afterwards. Will they inspect the structure? Can they re-tension or replace the fabric? Do they carry out repairs, or only installations? Will there be a record of what was installed? And if you want a maintenance arrangement, can they offer one?

This is the part of the decision ZIL Shades is built around: a structure treated as an asset with a life — inspected, maintained, repaired, refurbished, eventually replaced or removed — rather than a delivery that ends on installation day. Whether or not you end up speaking to us, ask every supplier the same questions. The answers will tell you a great deal.

13 How to compare companies and quotations

The point of these questions is not to catch anyone out. A good supplier enjoys them, because they are the questions that let them explain why their proposal costs what it does.

Did they understand what you need?

- Did they ask how you intend to use the space, rather than only how many square metres you want?
- Did they look at the site properly when the project warranted it?
- Did they ask whether your need is temporary or long-term?

About what they have proposed

- Why is this type of structure suitable for my property in particular?
- What alternatives should I be considering, and why not those?
- What are the limitations of this option? (Every option has some.)

About quality

- What materials are proposed, and why are they appropriate for this climate?
- What is included in this price — and what is specifically excluded?

About the installation

- How will it be supported or fixed, and what does that involve for my building or ground?
- Will existing surfaces be affected, and how will they be made good?
- Where will water go, and how will your team get access?

About the future

- What warranty applies, what does it cover, and who honours it?
- Who carries out repairs — you, or somebody else?
- Can components and fabric be replaced individually later?
- What happens if I want to modify, extend or move the structure?

You are not obliged to understand every answer. You are entitled to a clear one.

14 Common mistakes to avoid

- **Choosing on the lowest quotation alone**, without checking whether the two quotations describe the same scope.
- **Ordering before checking whether permission is needed** — the most expensive week anyone ever saves.
- **Copying the neighbour's structure.** Their orientation, exposure, ground and use may all differ from yours.
- **Buying permanence for a short-term situation**, or a temporary solution for a need you will still have in ten years.
- **Spending heavily on a property you are leaving.**

- **Ignoring where the water goes.** It rains rarely here, which is precisely why drainage gets forgotten.
- **Assuming all fabrics and all steel are the same.** They differ in ways that only appear after a few summers.
- **Choosing entirely on appearance,** without asking how it will look after five years of sun and dust.
- **Forgetting removal and relocation** — until the day you need to do one of them.
- **Not asking who maintains it,** and discovering the answer is nobody.

PART FIVE



Act on it

You are not obliged to understand every answer.
You are entitled to a clear one.

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15 Your seven-step buying journey

STEP	WHAT YOU ARE DOING	YOU ARE READY TO MOVE ON WHEN
1 Understand the problem	Name what you are actually trying to improve, and where.	You can say it in one sentence without using the word “shade”.
2 Decide whether it is worth it	Apply the three-question test: use, stay, value.	You know this is a yes, or an honest not-yet.
3 Understand your property	Look at the space, the fixing points, the sun, the drainage — and check community and lease requirements.	You know what is possible and what needs agreement.
4 Choose the type of solution	Permanent, semi-permanent or relocatable — then the structure type.	You can explain why this type, for this property.
5 Set a sensible budget	Match the spend to expected use and expected life.	Your figure is based on your situation, not someone else’s.
6 Compare more than price	Read each quotation as a scope. Ask the questions in section 13.	You understand what differs between the proposals.
7 Think beyond installation	Establish who inspects, maintains and repairs it, and what is documented.	You know who you will call in year three.

16 Before you request a quotation: your checklist

Take this to any supplier. It works just as well with ones we have never met.

- ☐ I know what problem I am trying to solve, and where.
- ☐ I know how often I realistically expect to use the space.
- ☐ I have considered whether this need is temporary or long-term.
- ☐ I have taken account of whether I own, rent or lease the property.
- ☐ I have checked my lease or title for anything about alterations.



- ☐ I have asked my landlord, community or property management whether approval is required — and have it in writing.
- ☐ I have decided whether the structure should be permanent, removable or relocatable.
- ☐ I have set a budget based on expected use and expected lifespan.
- ☐ I have thought about where rainwater will go.
- ☐ I understand what is included and excluded in each quotation.
- ☐ I have compared scope and materials, not only price.
- ☐ I know what the warranty covers and who honours it.
- ☐ I know who to contact after installation if the structure needs attention.
- ☐ I have asked whether fabric and components can be replaced individually.
- ☐ I have asked what happens if I later want to modify, extend or move it.

A CLOSING NOTE

ZIL Shades designs, engineers and installs awnings, pergolas, car parking shades, tensile shades and tents — and then inspects, maintains, repairs and refurbishes them for as long as they stand. That order matters: we look at the property, how you use it, what the community expects and what the structure will need in ten years before we recommend anything.

If this guide helps you decide that you do not need a structure at the moment, it has done its job. If it helps you buy well from somebody else, it has also done its job. And if you would like a conversation that starts with your property rather than a price list, we are happy to have one.

Made for life under the sun.

ZIL SHADES

MADE FOR LIFE UNDER THE SUN



A good structure is not the biggest,
the cheapest or the most expensive one.
It is the one that suits your property,
your life and the years you expect
to spend under it.

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