



Conservatory Craftsmen Publishes Guide to the Modern Orangery as a Year-Round Home Addition

September 02, 2026

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Conservatory Craftsmen has published a new educational guide titled "The Modern Orangery: From 17th-Century Architecture to Today's Most Elegant Home Addition." The resource traces the origins of the orangery and explains how this masonry-and-glass structure differs from a fully glazed conservatory, offering homeowners a factual overview of a building type that is gaining attention as a year-round living space.

The guide notes that orangeries first appeared in the 17th century on estates in France, England, and the Netherlands as a way to protect citrus trees during winter. Those early buildings combined thick masonry walls for warmth with tall windows for daylight and a solid or partially glazed roof to retain heat overnight. That same structural ratio remains the defining feature of a modern orangery: solid perimeter walls, a central glass roof lantern, and greater thermal mass than an all-glass room.

According to the publication, the difference between an orangery and a conservatory is structural rather than stylistic. A conservatory is built almost entirely of glass on the walls and roof. An orangery uses masonry walls and a lantern roof, which the company describes as holding temperature more steadily through seasonal swings. The guide states that masonry walls provide wall space for furniture and art while the glass

lantern still admits daylight at the center of the room. The result is a space intended for year-round use as a dining area, home office, reading room, or indoor garden rather than a seasonal enclosure.

Modern orangeries can also incorporate contemporary climate systems. Conservatory Craftsmen designs custom orangeries that can pair traditional architecture with sensors that respond to temperature and precipitation, adjusting shading, ventilation, and heating. Owners may also operate lighting, blinds, fans, and camera feeds from a smartphone. Additional options described in the guide include underfloor heating, bi-fold doors opening to a patio or garden, and built-in furniture planned around intended use.

A featured example is an orangery added to a 1918 French-style cottage in Oyster Bay, New York. The home had been constructed by French artisans, and the project had to address a steep-pitched tile roof and an inside corner with heavy rainwater runoff. The design used a flat roof with a skylight-style glass feature to connect to the existing roofline, along with custom mahogany doors and seasonal weatherproofing. The company presents the completed room as a year-round retreat that follows the original architecture rather than competing with it.

Other company projects illustrate related approaches to glass-and-masonry additions, including the Shorewood, Minnesota orangery designed for year-round growing, the Lake of the Isles conservatory in Minneapolis, the Excelsior Conservatory Restoration, and the Cedar Lakes Estate Glasshouse in New York. These installations show how materials such as masonry bases, mahogany detailing, lantern roofs, and high-performance glazing are adapted to historic cottages, lakefront homes, and larger event settings.

Jim Hewitt, owner of Conservatory Craftsmen, stated, "An orangery is still the same masonry-and-glass idea that kept rooms livable in the 1600s. The guide explains how that structure works today so homeowners can compare it fairly with a conservatory or a conventional addition."

Hewitt added, "The publication focuses on how the room is built and used. Solid walls, a glass lantern, and climate systems determine whether the space functions twelve months of the year."

The guide also covers permitting, typical project duration of several months from design approval to completion, and the role of site-specific engineering. Conservatory Craftsmen designs orangeries, conservatories, greenhouses, and garden rooms to match existing architecture, whether historic or new construction.

Founded in 1988 by Jim Hewitt, Conservatory Craftsmen is a family-owned firm specializing in the design, fabrication, and installation of custom conservatories, greenhouses, and orangeries. The company includes Mike Hewitt as vice president of production and Abel Santos-Meeke in architectural design, and it maintains operations supporting projects nationwide as well as a presence in Stonehouse, England.

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Conservatory Craftsmen

At Conservatory Craftsman, we take pride in being a trusted, knowledgeable conservatory builder. Part of that means that we've invested ourselves into perfecting remote automation so we can offer it to our clients to make their lives easier.

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