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Air Source Heat Pumps for Beginners by MEGGAN Perry

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Lots of people and organisations have become interested in renewable energy now that Carbon based fuels are becoming increasingly pricey and awareness of environmental issues is expanding. Heat pumps are becoming popular for heating of domestic homes, particularly air source heat pumps as they are relatively quick and easy to install.

An air source heat pump provides a degree of free energy, reducing heating bills and reducing harm to the environment. It does so by taking heat energy from outdoor air (making the outdoor air cooler in the process) and putting the extracted heat energy inside where it's useful.

The energy (heat) isn't entirely free because an electric pump is required to transfer the heat from the outdoor air to the indoor air, hence the term 'heat pump'.

The electric heat pump uses a small amount of electrical energy to transfer the heat but this is a tiny portion of the energy that would be required to make the heat from scratch instead of just moving it from outdoors to inside

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A similar process takes place with a home refrigerator. The refrigerator uses a heat pump to extract heat from the inside, making it cold, and transfer it to the outside. That is why you get heat from the back of the refrigerator; the heat pump moved the heat from the inside to the outside.

Air Source Heat pumps are available in several configurations, the main ones are 'air to air source heat pumps' and 'air to water source heat pumps'.

Air to air source heat pumps use the heat extracted from outside environment to directly warm indoor air. The heater part of the system looks like one of those slim line air conditioning units you see mounted high up on internal walls. The installation and maintenance of these units is minimal and there is no water pipe work to be installed in the building, so no need to rip up floorboards and carpets for installation. Another plus point of this type of unit is that, because it blows out warm air, the heat is almost instant. You don't have to wait for the secondary system, that's the water and the pipe work, to warm up.

Air to water source heat pumps use the heat extracted from the outside air to warm up a water circuit. The water circuit is usually used for under floor heating as the water produced is warm rather than hot and so suits the application perfectly. The advantage over conventional under floor heating systems is that it uses a lot less energy and therefore heating bills will be lower.

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