BBSA
The Authority on UK Shading

PRODUCT CHARACTERISTICS GUIDE

FOLDING ARM AWNINGS

This document has been produced by the British Blind and Shutter Association (BBSA) to highlight the key characteristics of folding arm awnings to help you make an informed choice when buying your awning. The characteristics detailed below represent the state of the art and any relevant standard.

General

Folding arm awnings installed to a wall which have no other support are sun shading products and are not designed to be used in adverse weather conditions.

When fully extended the arms used on a folding arm awning are slightly bent, to both allow the arms to retract and to cushion wind loads.

While the pitch on folding arm awnings can be adjusted, from as little as 0 degrees to more than 45 degrees, a pitch of 14 degrees is ideal as this usually ensures water from a light rain shower cannot gather (pool) on the fabric which could cause damage to the fabric and folding arms.

Fabrics

Awning fabrics have some specific characteristics. These are explained and often shown pictorially in the fabric swatch selectors from which you will make your fabric choice.

These characteristics can include waviness around the seams along with elongation of the outer side panels, which is due to double thickness arrangement of the fabric where it is joined and hemmed. These characteristics are considered normal and do not affect the function or performance of the awning.

Most awning fabrics are produced from solution dyed acrylic fibres, meaning the colour is dyed right through to the core and typically do not show significant signs of fading over their lifespan, however all fabrics will fade over time.

Wind loads

Wind loads are to a greater extent absorbed by the fabric, and to a lesser extent transferred to the awning's framework. To protect the awning framework and the fabric, awnings must be retracted when the wind speed exceeds the wind resistance class stated by the manufacturer.

Retracting an awning during high wind speeds can cause damage so it is important the awning is fully retracted before strong winds prevail. If operated automatically via sensors, any limits set on the sensor must not be changed. Some wind sensors may not work unless the awning is fully extended.

Sensors are not a failsafe device for retracting an awning in the case of high winds and it is ultimately the users responsibility to ensure the awning is retracted.

Shade cover

The amount of shade created by an awning is determined by the location and orientation of the property in question, the position of the sun (time of day and season), and also the height, angle and overall size of the awning. It is not possible to guarantee the amount of shade an awning will provide.

Installation

To ensure a secure fixing, special brackets (spreader plates) may be required to spread the load. On bungalows a folding arm awning will need to be raised to ensure the correct height clearance. This will result in a gap between the awning and the building.

Planning permission and conservation

It is the responsibility of the customer to ensure there are no planning/conservation restrictions which would prevent the installation of an awning.

Always ensure you read and carefully follow the operating and maintenance instructions.

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Motorisation

There is a wide range of motorised solutions available for your comfort and convenience and each system will have its own characteristics. Some points to consider are:

- **Speed and alignment:** Due to mechanical and electrical tolerances, awnings in the same installation may not travel at the same speed and may not line up if stopped during the travel of the awning.
- **Noise:** Some noise will be emitted from the motor.
- **Wiring:** Some surface wiring may be required. Where 240V mains power is involved, a competent person, who can certify the works, will be required to provide a power feed unless the awning can be powered from a plug inserted into an existing socket.
- **Motor protection:** For safety reasons, most motors are fitted with a thermal cut-out to protect them from getting too hot (usually from over-use). When cooled sufficiently, the motor will start working again.

Wireless control

Most awnings are controlled by wireless handsets or switches and occasional signal interference may affect the smooth operation of the awning. Awnings should only be operated when you are able to see the awning so you may check its movement.

Smart home hub

For motorised awnings where a smart home hub is used the signals to the awning may occasionally be interrupted by other wireless devices in the home such as smart speakers or doorbells. This can affect the operation, or seamless operation of the awning.

Visual product inspection

When checking the visual characteristics of awnings, the following should be observed:

Viewing distance and lighting
3m for exterior products in diffuse daylight

Viewing angle
Perpendicular to the surface being checked.

Viewing aids
Naked eye (and any corrective glasses if applicable).

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