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The Groenkloof Kloof-Light Playbook

Sun, shade and privacy, window by window — written for the reserve-edge, kloof-cut homes that actually stand on these streets, not for a catalogue. Real sun angles, real Highveld climate, and what we'd specify on each elevation, with the honest trade-offs both ways.



Most shading advice is written for nowhere in particular. This is written for a suburb pressed against the edge of one of the country's oldest proclaimed nature reserves,⁸ at roughly 25.7° South and about 1,300 m up,¹ where the December noon sun stands almost overhead and the

June noon sun drops to 40° and slides in under the same eave that shaded it in summer. Groenkloof adds problems of its own: kloof-cut erven on winding slopes, heritage homes built for privacy as much as light, and a canopy — famously the white jacarandas of Herbert Baker Street⁴ — that dapples the light rather than switching it off. Everything below is sourced; the reference list is at the foot of the page.

— ONE

Why Groenkloof is its own problem

Groenkloof — "green ravine" in Afrikaans — is an older, established suburb among Pretoria's wealthiest streets, sloping down toward the southern boundary it shares with the 600-hectare Groenkloof Nature Reserve, proclaimed by President Kruger in 1895 to protect the oribi.⁸ That reserve edge, and the mature canopy that comes with it, is the first thing that makes shading here different: the light rarely arrives flat. It comes filtered through indigenous trees at street level, and raw and unbuffered wherever a window sits above the canopy line.

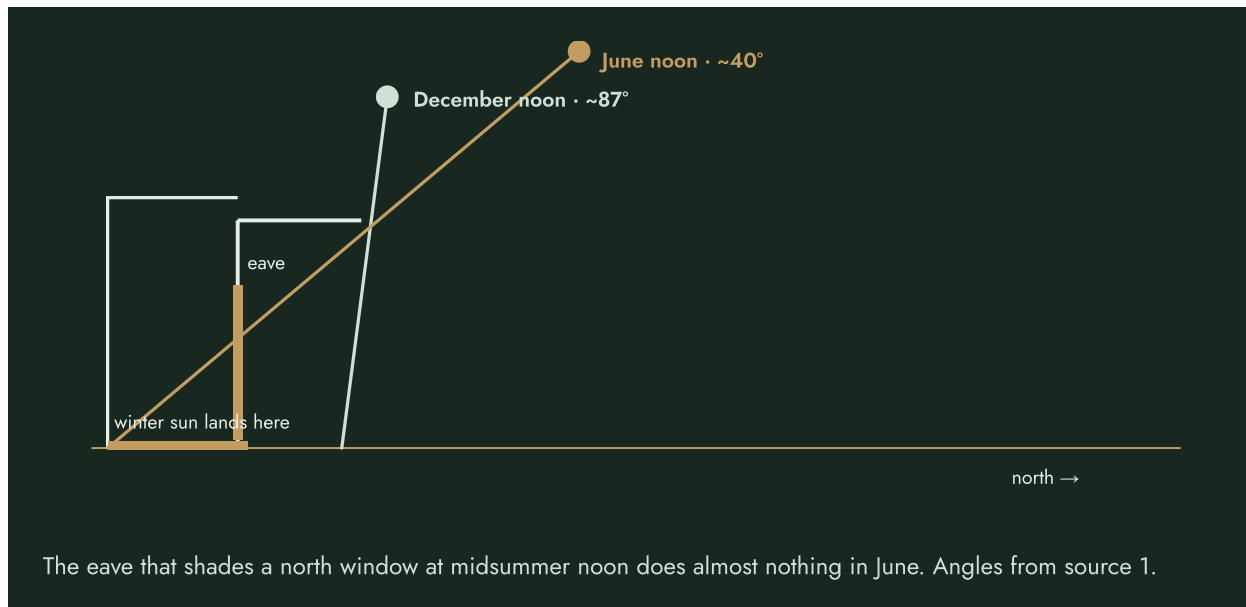
The second complication is the housing stock. These are heritage-era homes with deep verandas, tall sash and timber-framed windows, and high garden walls, long associated with Pretoria's diplomatic quarter and built for privacy as much as daylight.⁵ A modern blind or roller shutter has to respect that, not fight it — custom brackets for out-of-square timber reveals, not off-the-shelf fittings. And because the roads follow the kloof contours rather than a flat grid,⁵ two houses on the same street can face completely different aspects. One suburb, and realistically three different specifications: the shaded heritage ground floor, the raw upstairs or reserve-facing glass above the trees, and the newer architect-built additions with wide frameless glazing.

— TWO

The light here, by season

Pretoria sits at about 25°43' South, roughly 1,300 m above sea level.¹ Four numbers do most of the explaining:

- **Midsummer noon: the sun stands at $\sim 87^\circ$** — within a few degrees of straight overhead.¹
- **Midwinter noon: $\sim 40^\circ$, due north.**¹
- **Midsummer the sun sets at $\sim 243^\circ$** — south of due west, not on the west line.¹
- **Midwinter it rises at $\sim 64^\circ$ and sets at $\sim 295^\circ$** , both north of the east—west line.¹



Read practically: **the summer sun is the easy one and the winter sun is the sneaky one.** At $\sim 87^\circ$ a modest veranda — and Groenkloof homes tend to have generous ones — shades a north window at midday in December almost by itself. At 40° in June the sun comes in *under* that same veranda and reaches metres across the floor, which is exactly when you want it for the warmth.

Two Highveld facts then change the specification. UV rises roughly 10% for every 1,000 m of altitude, and the Highveld's altitude plus its frequent clear, high-pressure skies puts Pretoria among the higher-UV places in the country, with summer index readings reaching the extreme band.⁶ Annual sunshine runs to around 3,200 hours, sunniest in the dry winter,² so fabric fading is a year-round problem, not a summer one. And the summer rain arrives as afternoon thunderstorms, with hail concentrated on the Highveld and peaking in the December–January afternoon, broadly 13:00 to 17:00³ — precisely the hours a patio awning is most likely to be out.

Elevation by elevation

Take a compass to each room before assuming anything — on a kloof street the road tells you nothing about which way the glass faces. Four cases, and a fifth for what sits above the canopy.

NORTH

Sun every day of the year

The good light, and the reserve views tend to point this way. Generous in winter, punishing at the top of summer. The mistake is over-specifying — heavy blackout throws away free June warmth along with the December glare. North wants something adjustable through the day, not a permanent off-switch.

WEST

The expensive elevation

From early afternoon the sun swings toward that ~243° sunset and keeps dropping.¹ No veranda shades it, because the light arrives from underneath. On a reserve-facing or upper slope with nothing across the way, heat, glare and fabric fade all land here together.

EAST

Glare, not heat

The mirror of west, but against cool overnight air and cool masonry, so it rarely becomes a heat problem — it becomes a glare problem instead. Breakfast rooms and east bedrooms take direct sun before anyone's ready for it. Light control solves it far more cheaply than a west elevation ever does.

SOUTH

Calm, with a summer caveat

Even, indirect light — the right room for a desk. One caveat: December's sunrise and sunset both sit south of the east–west line,¹ so a south room catches a raking hour of low sun at each end of a December day. In June, none at all.

And then: above the canopy

The tree cover that shades a heritage ground floor at street level does nothing for that home's own upstairs bedrooms, and nothing at all for a rebuilt double-volume glass wall built above the tree line to hold a reserve view.⁸ Hence the common Groenkloof complaint: a cool, comfortable ground floor and an upstairs room or a new glass wall taking the raw version of everything in section two.



External venetians on a west-facing glass wall: the sun is stopped outside the pane, the tilt keeps the reserve outlook.

— FOUR

What we'd specify, and why

Seven answers, each with its reasoning and its honest trade-off. Tap the ones that sound like your house — they carry through to the window schedule and the free-measure form below, so you never retype them.

FOR HARD NORTH OR WEST GLASS, ABOVE THE CANOPY

External venetians, ahead of an interior blackout roller

The physics is the whole argument. Louvres outside the glass stop the sun before it reaches the pane; an interior blackout absorbs that energy once it's already through, so the fabric and the glass warm up and radiate it straight back into the room. External venetians also tilt, so you keep the reserve view and the daylight that a rolled-down blind takes away entirely.

The trade-off, honestly: the most expensive route here, and a permanent fixing to the outside of the facade — which on an older heritage home can bring a heritage step, covered in section five, and needs a wind strategy on an exposed slope. Where external isn't possible, sunscreen mesh over a blackout on a double bracket is the honest second best: less cost, meaningfully less heat control.

WHERE A VENETIAN WON'T SUIT, OR A ROOM WANTS FULL BLACKOUT

Roller shutters — the other way to stop it outside

Aluminium slats rolling down from a headbox outside the glass. Closed, the slat curtain and the trapped air behind it insulate as well as they shade; half-lowered, it takes the top of a tall window and leaves the bottom clear. Often the better answer than louvres on a very large or high opening, or a room that would rather be dark and cool than keep a view. Motorised as standard, with a manual override.

The trade-off, honestly: position, not tilt — you're moving the whole curtain up or down, not angling slats. And to be plain: these are **shading shutters, for sun, heat and glare — not security-rated shutters**, which are a different product we can quote on request.

FOR NORTH-FACING RECEPTION AND RESERVE-VIEW ROOMS

Sunscreen mesh, not blackout — sized to keep the view

North light is the good light; you want the sting taken out, not the room switched off. An open-weave mesh around 5% openness cuts the glare and much of the UV while the reserve, or the garden, stays legible through it. On a home with a run of matching reception windows — not unusual on these streets — specifying one fabric and colour across the whole elevation is what makes it read as a scheme rather than a row of individual fixes.

The trade-off, honestly: mesh gives daytime privacy only; after dark, with the lamps on, it reverses and you become the lit side. Where a room genuinely needs both, a double roller answers it — mesh in front for the day, blackout behind for the night.

FOR BEDROOMS

Blockout rollers — the reveal matters more than the fabric

Every blackout fabric is opaque, and almost no bedroom complaint is really about the fabric. It's light leaking round the edges, and a deep heritage reveal has a lot of edge for that to happen along. Fitted inside the reveal the blind sits properly in the joinery and you accept a hairline of light each side; face-fixed over the opening it's far darker, at the cost of covering the reveal and the timber.

The trade-off, honestly: no free option here — inside-fit for looks, face-fit for darkness, or inside-fit with side channels for both at the cost of one more component. On a nursery, pair either with cordless or motorised operation.



Timber venetians on original sash joinery: 50 mm slats read at the rhythm of the glazing bars, and tilt to steer the light rather than switch it off.

FOR THE ORIGINAL JOINERY, AND ROOMS THAT ARE HARD TO HEAT

Timber venetians on the sash windows; cellular where the cold is the problem

Fifty-millimetre basswood slats read at roughly the rhythm of a multi-pane sash's glazing bars, so the window still looks like the one the house was built with — and tilting them upward bounces light off the ceiling, lighting a desk without glare on it. Where the complaint is cold rather than glare — a tall, corniced heritage room under Pretoria's dry, clear winter nights — a cellular blind is the better answer: its honeycomb traps a layer of air against the glass, and it's the air that insulates.

The trade-off, honestly: timber slats collect dust and want the occasional wipe, and past about two metres wide we'd split the opening or motorise it. Cellular won't take scrubbing, so kitchens, sculleries and bathrooms get aluminium venetians instead — and cellular doesn't tilt, so it's insulation and privacy, not light-steering.



A cellular blind's honeycomb traps air against the glass — the quiet answer for a tall heritage room that's hard to heat on a clear Highveld winter night.

FOR THE VERANDA AND THE TERRACE

A folding-arm awning with a wind sensor — or a zip screen where the slope is exposed

Post-free shade that retracts suits this climate exactly: cover through the summer entertaining months, and the low 40° winter sun back on the paving in July.¹ Motorising it is the same argument one step on, and a battery tube means nobody chases cable through original plaster. On a sheltered, walled Groenkloof garden an awning is the simpler answer; on an exposed upper slope or reserve edge with nothing to break the wind, a zip screen — mesh tensioned inside side channels — copes with gusts an open awning arm can't.

The trade-off, honestly: awning fabric is a consumable, and battery tubes want charging once or twice a year. With hail peaking in the December–January afternoon,³ a wind/hail sensor isn't an upsell — it retracts the fabric when nobody's home to. A zip screen fixed in channels has no such exposure, which is the honest reason to choose it on the more open stands.

FOR THE ARCHITECT-BUILT ADDITIONS AND LONG MATCHING ELEVATIONS

Concealed blind boxes on the frameless glass

A concealed blind box drops the fabric from a slim slot in the ceiling with every bracket hidden — the detail architects specify on the newer wide-glass additions standing behind Groenkloof's older street facades. On a long run of matching windows, one motorised system opens the whole elevation together rather than window by window.

The trade-off, honestly: a concealed box is a build or renovation-stage decision — hard to retrofit into a finished ceiling without opening it up. If the ceiling's already closed, a slim face-fixed cassette is the honest alternative that gets most of the clean look without the plaster work.

Want this marked up for your house?

Tell us which rooms are the problem and we'll send you a copy of this guide with notes written against your own elevations — which of the above we'd put where, and why. Same guide, read for your house instead of in general.

Thank you — that's through.

One of our expert consultants will send your marked-up copy of the guide, and will be in touch about the rest whenever you're ready.

— FIVE

Heritage & the reserve edge, plainly

Section 34 of the National Heritage Resources Act 25 of 1999 provides that no person may alter or demolish any structure — or part of a structure — older than 60 years without a permit from the relevant provincial heritage resources authority. In Gauteng, which includes the City of Tshwane, that authority is PHRA-G, and "alter" is defined broadly: any action affecting the structure, appearance or physical properties of a place.⁷ Given Groenkloof's long-established heritage stock,⁵ a meaningful share of its original homes could well be old enough to fall under section 34; a modern rebuild or a recent addition on the same stand generally isn't.

Inside the reveal is a furnishing decision. Outside the glass is a building decision.

A blind fitted inside the reveal doesn't alter the structure. Anything fixed to the *outside* of the facade — external-venetian guide rails, an awning cassette, a roller-shutter headbox, zip-screen channels — is a change to part of a structure, and on an older Groenkloof home may need that PHRA-G permit. What we can do: specify slim profiles and quiet colours, and supply the drawings and product data an application needs. What we won't do is call an approval a formality, or submit it on your behalf — that belongs to PHRA-G and your own heritage professional.

What only a site visit answers

Everything above follows from a plan and a compass. These five don't, and any one of them can change the recommendation:

1. **Reveal depth, at several points.** Heritage openings are rarely square, and the gap between a shallow and a deep reveal decides whether a headbox sits inside the joinery or proud of it.
2. **What's behind the plaster.** Solid masonry, later brick-and-cavity, or a rebuilt stud wall — the substrate decides the bracket, and whether an external system is viable on that wall at all.
3. **True orientation, room by room.** Kloof-street homes are often turned to the slope or the view rather than to the road, so orientation can't be read off the street — and everything in sections two and three depends on it.
4. **Wind exposure at your specific stand.** A walled, hedge-sheltered garden and an exposed upper-slope terrace a few doors apart behave completely differently — which decides an awning versus a zip screen.
5. **Where the power goes, and any sign-off the home needs.** Whether a plug is within reach, whether a battery tube recharges without a ladder, and whether anything fixed to the facade crosses that heritage threshold.

That's the honest reason the measure exists, and why it's free: better to find these out before quoting than after fitting.



A roller shutter's headbox and channels fix to the outside of the facade — the point in section five where a shading choice can become a heritage one on an older home.

— SEVEN

Two ways forward — pick whichever suits you

One gets you an exact answer; the other a rough number to think about first. Both free, neither commits you to anything.

THE STRAIGHT ANSWER

Book your free expert measure

A consultant comes with samples, checks the five things in section six, measures every opening precisely and leaves you with a written, itemised, per-window quote. We take

five or six measure appointments a week across the Groenkloof ridge suburbs, so the diary fills early — no charge, no obligation either way.

Thank you — that's through.

One of our expert consultants will contact you shortly to arrange your free in-home measure, with samples, at a time that suits you.

OR, FIRST

Pop in rough sizes on the window schedule below and we'll send a budget range by the next working day. Unsure how to take the sizes, or would rather leave that to us? Leave it — our consultant measures for free, and you'll get exact per-window pricing either way.

BUILD MY WINDOW SCHEDULE ↓

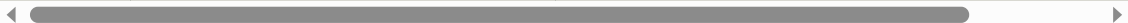
Plenty of people do both — rough sizes now, the measure after.

Groenkloof Blinds — window schedule Walk the house, fill this in, then type it in at groenkloofblinds.co.za. Work in millimetres, take the width before the drop, and measure the opening itself.

— YOUR BALLPARK, IN ABOUT TWO MINUTES

The window schedule

One line per window. Rough is fine — a tape measure and a guess to the nearest 50 mm is plenty for a budget range. Nothing here is binding, and nothing is priced from it on the spot: the real number comes from the free measure.

ROOM	WIDTH (MM)	DROP (MM)	INSIDE OR OUTSIDE THE REVEAL	PRO
				

Nothing on the schedule yet

SEND THIS SCHEDULE WITH MY DETAILS ↑

Your rows travel up to the free-measure form and go off with your details — we come back with a budget range by the next working day. Would rather not measure at all? Leave it blank and just book the free measure: the consultant measures for you, and you get exact per-window pricing instead of a range.

Nothing on this page is binding, nothing is priced from it on the spot, and nobody's going to phone you about a half-filled table. Print it, walk the house, come back to it whenever.

REFERENCES

Sources

Every factual claim above about the sun path, the Highveld climate, Groenkloof's history and the heritage law comes from one of these. Where a figure came from a climate aggregator rather than a primary weather-station export, that's flagged in the underlying research file rather than presented as more certain than it is.

1. Gaisma — [Pretoria sun & moon data](#) (latitude ~25.7°S, ~1,300 m altitude, solar-noon elevation and sunrise/sunset azimuths for the June and December solstices).
2. Weather Atlas — [Pretoria climate](#) (annual sunshine hours, seasonal rainfall pattern, afternoon summer thunderstorms).
3. Kahraman, A. et al. — [Characteristics of hail hazard in South Africa based on satellite detection of convective storms](#), *Nat. Hazards Earth Syst. Sci.* 23, 1549–1565 (2023) (Highveld/Gauteng hail concentration, December–January and afternoon peak).
4. Evendo — [The white jacarandas of Pretoria](#) (Herbert Baker Street, the white/albino jacarandas unique in South Africa); The South African — [Herbert Baker Street on CNN's list](#).
5. Wikipedia — [Groenkloof, Pretoria](#) (meaning of the name, affluent established suburb, heritage stock, boundaries, proximity to the nature reserve and University of Pretoria).
6. Wright, C.Y. et al. — [Solar Ultraviolet Radiation, Skin Cancer and Photoprotective Strategies in South Africa](#), *Photochemistry & Photobiology* (Wiley); and WHO — [Radiation: Ultraviolet](#) (UV rises ~10% per 1,000 m; Highveld altitude + clear skies = high ambient UVR).
7. SAIV — [Provincial Heritage Resources Authority: Gauteng \(PHRA-G\)](#); The Heritage Portal — [heritage processes FAQ](#) (National Heritage Resources Act 25 of 1999 s34, the 60-year rule, PHRA-G's role in

Gauteng).

8. Groenkloof Residents' Association — **A Green Suburb** (Groenkloof Nature Reserve on the suburb's southern boundary, ~600 ha, proclaimed 1895 to protect the oribi).

The full underlying research, including facts we could not independently verify, is logged at wiki/research/areas/groenkloofblinds.co.za.md . The sun-path diagram, the elevation notes and every product suggestion here are ours: our own work, our own opinion, given free and with nothing owed. Nothing here is a heritage-approval opinion — that belongs to PHRA-G and your own heritage professional.