Preventing Mold and Mildew by Controlling Humidity and Condensation In our Salt Marsh Cottages

Our Lowcountry environment is very humid and our cottages are at the water's edge making indoor humidity control very important to prevent condensation, mold and mildew. Condensation is caused by high humidity and temperature differences on surfaces in the cottage.

Some tips to reduce humidity and prevent condensation

When you are away from the cottage set the A/C to a temperature that will allow the unit to run enough to keep the indoor relative humidity at 55% or below. This may require a setting of 76 degrees or lower.

Set the fan control on your thermostat to "AUTO". This allows the air handler fan to turn off when the compressor cycles off. Leaving the fan control to "ON" will run the air handler fan continuously and actually increase humidity. This happens because when the compressor cycles off the cold coil inside your cottage is wet with the moisture that has been removed from the air. If the fan continues to run, that moisture will be put back into the cottage.

Use ceiling fans in all the rooms to move the air around and prevent stagnant air from collecting up near the sky lights where condensation and mold can be a problem. Use your ceiling fans all the time, even when you are away from the cottage for an extended time. Running your ceiling fans all the time helps minimize the temperature differences through out the cottage.

If possible, seal up air leaks in windows and doors to prevent humid outdoor air from entering the cottage. While it might be impractical, adding insulation can help prevent condensation on surfaces with differing temperatures.

Maintain your heat pump with an annual contract from your HVAC contractor to ensure that it is working at 100%

When the time comes to replace the heat pump at your cottage, consider one of the new variable speed units. These units increase or decrease speed and output depending on the demand. They are very efficient and do the best job of dehumidification.