

original home



# Making a Great Entrance

By Joan W. Ziegler

The Chinese have long held a home's entrance in the highest esteem—considering it critical to the happiness and wealth of the family. The front entrance is the gateway between the outside world and the inner sanctum of house and home. Visitors experience positive, negative, or indifferent feelings from the moment they drive up to the curb or our feet hit the path to the door—what is happening in the space around an entrance directly impacts the way we feel as we approach the front door. For a great entrance, the scale and relationships of the house, the porch, entrance stoop, steps, walkways, and plantings must invite visitors to your

door, and create a welcoming space for you to receive guests.

## Paths

Well-designed entrances draw you to the door with an invisible magnetism created by paths and plantings. Widening paths where they connect with the drive or sidewalk subconsciously directs visitors to the starting point. Curving the path or momentarily eclipsing the view of the door uses curiosity to pull us around the bend and adds an element of surprise to the entrance. A welcoming path should be wide enough to feel comfortable, easy to navigate, naturally lead you in



the right direction, and present the front door. Good lighting and accessibility are essential for safety, but details that lead us down the path are a vital part of creating a welcoming entrance and should not be overlooked.

## Plantings

Successful plantings frame the entrance and lead you to the door. Flowers and interesting plantings draw the eye down the path while punctuating, protecting, and enhancing the structures “set in stone.” Select foundation plantings that reflect the architecture of your home to settle the house and frame the entrance without encroaching on the doorway. Create the illusion of a wider path with linear low-growing plantings that flank one or both sides of a narrow walkway. Use perennial flower plantings to spill over walkways that feel too wide. Border straight walks with curved planting beds to add interest, colors, and textures. Greet visitors with a bouquet of flowers by placing a container on the stoop or the front steps.

## Steps

Steps are a key component of nearly all entrances and need to be comfortable and in scale with the house and the outdoors. For outdoor steps, we recommend a 5–6” rise with a 14–16” tread, as compared to an indoor step with a typical 7” rise and 11” tread. To avoid feeling faced with a climb to the top of Mt. Everest, steps should be gathered and separated by resting spaces so that the top step is always below eye level. Wide



steps at the stoop help to present the front door, welcome visitors, and provide space for entrance containers.

## Stoops and Porches

The stoop or porch is the transition space where our guests gather or wait before being invited into the home. Ideally, we would like stoops and porches to be generous enough so that guests do not have to step off when we open the door for them and, when possible, provide shelter and protection from the sun, wind, and rain. When designed to be large enough to hold chairs, benches, or swings they create a welcoming place to greet and visit with friends and neighbors.

The Chinese philosophy of Feng Shui speaks of the entrance to the house as the “open mouth,” which accepts and welcomes people as well as the “turtle back,” which protects and secures the home. When these two work together, what results is an entrance that attracts, accepts, and protects all who enter. Great entrances combine these principles with personalized touches that reflect you and the architecture of your home.

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