

Creating a welcoming entrance to your home

By Maria Fox

Street appeal isn't just about selling real estate. It is an important element in creating a home that you love living in, as well as one that your guests will like to visit. Who isn't enchanted by a home with an inviting entrance; one that exudes good vibes and makes you wish you lived there. And after a hard day's work, it's good to come home to a house that feels like it's waiting to take you in.

A welcoming entrance sets the tone for any structure. This is especially true for a business. In fact, the dollars spent to enhance the entry to a business is money very well spent. Well-tended entrances silently sell the health and competency of an establishment better than any advertising will. Think about it. How many restaurants have you passed by and made the decision to try it based solely on the impression made by the state of the entrance? Poor lighting, dying plants, peeling paint or algae-filled fountains don't say "Good food and service inside" for a restaurant, or "We'll take excellent care of your pet" for a veterinary office, for instance. Instead, the lack of care to these seemingly unrelated details greatly

diminishes the perceived skill and credibility of the enterprise no matter what the profession. And the reverse is also true. A good entrance will instill confidence in potential customers and help strengthen the bottom line.

Beyond the aesthetics, a great entrance is a virtue that realtors love. They know that they're likely to seal the best deal if what they are selling is a home that people want to live in, even before they get inside. Real estate values edge up or down by the impression made from the street. So if you're selling, a few extra dollars spent here is a wise investment.

Here are a few tips to create a welcoming entrance to your home or business.

Door Decorations. The most popular decorative accent for the door is a floral wreath or filled basket. Typically this is a casual look, yet there are many new contemporary materials that create more modern looking designs. Select one in tones that compliment the exterior surface colors like paint or stone work. Be sure the decoration isn't too heavy and will hang securely as people come and go. Before hanging your door decoration, feel the back side of it for sharp areas and apply a piece of protective felt to avoid potential scratches. Use an

over-the-door-frame wreath hanger (again, use felt pads to protect against scratches to the door's finish) rather than a nail; for glass doors use one of the 3M hangers designed to attach onto the glass, or for metal doors, the magnetic hangers work well.

Decorative Pots. Nothing enhances an entry more vibrantly than planted pots. Groupings of staggered sizes create a dramatic impact when brimming with blooming flowers and foliage. Frame your door with pairs of matching pots planted with sculpted trees or shrubs like privets, or boxwood for a more traditional effect. Or create visual interest with a specimen tree like a dwarf Japanese maple for a focal point that is casual with simple sophistication.

Benches and Arbors. The front porch is a perfect place for a bench. Benches say "come sit a spell," no matter where they are in the landscape, but on the front porch they add that special invitation to come on over and relax. Arbors have a similar effect on us. We like to imagine them leading us to some magical new place — which of course they are: your home. An arbor at or near your entry is an architectural effect that will enhance your street appeal dramatically.

Water Feature. In feng shui, the ancient Chinese art of placement, there is no more

auspicious home accessory than a water feature. Ancient Chinese practitioners believed (and their modern day counterparts still do) that water flowing towards a home entry brought with it good fortune and favor. Whether you appreciate feng shui or not, there is something universally positive about a water feature. The waters seem to soothe and energize us simultaneously. Fountains are available in thousands of styles, finishes and sizes. Choose a style and size that enhances your home's overall look and feel.

Lighting. Be sure your entrance is properly lit. Not only is this an aesthetic must in terms of the positive visual effects, but at night, a safety issue. Light the entrance as well as the garden borders and walkways leading to the door. Garden lights that spot key areas and fountains or statuary create a great effect. And don't forget about the lights that shine through the front windows of your home. At night they are a part of the visual landscape, creating a cozy and inviting hint of the cozy and inviting spaces inside.

Information courtesy of Wight's Home & Garden, 5026 196th St. S.W., Lynnwood. Contact them at (425) 775-3636 or visit www.wights.com. ■



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