

More Than A Door

A Landscape Designer's Perspective on Entryways

BY KAREN KING WITH LISA BURNS

As kids who witnessed the genesis of television, we were also first to watch TV game shows. For me, it all started with a door. We cheered, we jeered, we shouted, "Pick door number 1!" Of course, we as the audience were given a sneak peek at the wondrous prizes hidden behind the numbered doors: a microwave, a shiny red convertible, or an "all expenses paid" trip to Honolulu!! We learned about choices, the easy ones anyway, from the game show hosts. Then we got older and the choices got harder. Now they play for millions of dollars in little numbered attaché cases, but gone are the Hollywood doors numbered 1, 2 and 3. Gone is the microwave cloistered behind door number 1, probably now part of the Cretaceous layer of some landfill. And the shiny red convertible that purred behind door number 2 is now a "classic" that yawns behind barn doors, waiting for its annual day in the sun. As for that "magical" trip to Honolulu, hidden behind door number 3? Well, let's just say I chose the magic of Maine.

But those doors! They resonate. They speak of choices. They represent the proverbial beginning and end of every journey, no matter how short or how long. They are more than just access or egress; they are the portals between experiences. We see them everywhere. They engage our curiosity and arouse memories we can all relate to; the sound of a screen door slamming conjures up instant images of summer. Doors are the perfect metaphor for change; "as one door closes, so shall another open." Thus, should we not give them a bit more pizzazz and punctuation in our landscapes?

We need to move away from the so-called "curb appeal" landscape, the uneventful, lineal, rote suburban symmetry that so

often surrounds our buildings. We can create unique expressions of ourselves, in conjunction with our structures. We have come to know that we, as humans, are a part of the connective tissue that makes the environment what it is. And so we can, by choice, create this living conduit between the external and the internal.

As landscape designers, we help people create an atmosphere germane to this experience they wish to create. Each door, and what lies behind, has its own energy. We strive to embody that energy and extend or focus it before we actually reach our destination, at the right door. Homes, large and small, businesses, hospitals, schools, outdoor living spaces and driveways, all have a different image or experience to impart. We've all heard of THE PEARLY GATES. Without a doubt, that can create an image and an emotion! We can unlock the sometimes "closed" look of an entry and create a subliminal language.

Color, as we know, can affect our mood. Softer door colors are calming, while vivid colors can shout, "Pick me!"

The *materials* we choose for our doors speak of durability, strength and prestige.





PHOTOS: KAREN KING



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Footpaths—winding or straight, soft like grass, low growing ground covers, such as creeping thyme and mosses, or mulches, now available in a variety of shades and textures, or hard like natural inlaid bluestone, granite cobbles, or cultured pavers and brick, manufactured in every conceivable shade of color, and proportional to the experience we wish to create—are the road map of our journey. They guide our way, and they are pivotal to our experience. This is where form truly meets function. Our needs vary widely here as some of us seek a more consistent surface, while others prefer the “less traveled path,” a style where one must be confident in their footing. Punctuating these paths with plantings, stone or sculpture helps to create the adventure and intrigue of the journey.

Courtyards and patios speak of gathering and unification experiences, again, sized according to the experience one wishes to inspire. Connecting the footpaths to these spaces enhance our feeling of freedom. When well-heeled with plantings and a distant focal point, they serve to connect rather than isolate us from the space and environment at large.

Gates and archways embody order and definition. They express boundaries and security, and can encourage a feeling of

having entered our very own “secret garden.” Living gateways, such as hedges and tree rows, are more subtle in their message, but no less poignant, as we are enveloped by their comforting presence.

Water features can evoke emotional wellness and a measure of calm and introspect. They often compel us to linger, and drink in (metaphorically) the sounds and sights that have ever rejuvenated all of life, thus inducing a sense of peace and serenity.

Doors play a star role in our conscious and subconscious mind. And with some simple techniques and structure we can enhance the harmony by intertwining the door to the total experience. With planning and design, we have opened the closed door and unlocked the mediocrity that constrains rather than connects the door to our experiences. The door can, and should, be more!! It all hinges on you!

Karen King and Lisa Burns are co-owners of Cabins To Castles Inc., an award winning, environmentally responsible, internationally recognized company endorsed by several agencies, including the Interlocking Concrete Pavement Institute, the International Erosion Control Association, Federal Environmental Protection Agency, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, National Soil and Water Conservation Society, National Certified Profession in Erosion and Sediment Control (#2625) and Maine DEP, specializing in all aspects of site consultation and permitting, comprehensive landscaping and stoneworks, erosion control and reclamation, design and installation; “Naturally”