

Garden entrances

Linking indoors and out is crucial to squeezing the most from every inch of your home, so here's our must-read guide to making an entrance

WORDS MARK LAURENCE

Outdoor space is an extension of your house and by thinking about how you move in and out of your garden, you'll be able to create an outdoor area that works better for you and will ultimately encourage you to spend more time outside. Treat your garden entrance as something special and you'll look forward to coming home.

Choice of materials

One of the most important elements in creating a garden entrance is the flooring, and here there are two choices: contrast, or continuous flooring – both have their place.

Contrast speaks of transition, change, movement into a different space and this is usual for a front door, where public realm meets private. Under a porch or pergola there may be paving that differs from both the house and the rest of the garden, to emphasise the uniqueness of that space.

Continuous flooring, on the other hand, brings consistency, easy movement in or out, fluidity. This is ideal for a private exit into the rear garden and is synonymous with alfresco living. This would reflect and mimic the internal flooring of the house, whether, wood, stone, tile or brick and bring this outside, preferably at the same level.

In this respect, decking is very useful as it can be raised to the house floor level without concerns over damp-proofing. There are ___



Seamless link

Location: South-west London
Brief: To make house and garden feel like one open space
Designer: Modular Garden

When Mark and Corinna Butcher decided to revamp their compact city garden, they had clear intentions. 'We wanted it to feel like an extension of the house,' explains Mark. 'And it had to be low-maintenance.'

They approached Modular Garden who then came up with a design that used similar, hard-wearing materials to create a seamless link between indoors and out. When the folded doors are completely open, the wooden flooring mirrors the outdoor decking, while a strip of black tiles runs down one side of the kitchen and continues to the end of the garden, which also has the effect of lengthening the space.

'In terms of planting we went for architectural styles that provide plenty of colour all year round,' says Joe Swift, design director of Modular Garden. The new design means the couple and their son James [12] use the garden far more than they previously did. 'It's a very family-friendly design,' says Mark. 'And best of all, we feel connected to the garden now, even when we're inside the house.'

Toolbox Something for the weekend Garden entrances

two approaches for decking, retrofit, or continuous fit. The former may not be able to use exactly the same material, but a close or complimentary match, while the latter has the opportunity to be exactly the same.

When choosing materials, a critical look at their sustainable credentials is essential, especially if you're thinking of using something like Indian sandstone. Try Marshalls (marshalls.co.uk) for paving, as they operate seemingly sound policies on this issue, and for timber check out the Friends of the Earth Good Wood Guide, available on their website (foe.co.uk).

Building a structure

How you approach the design of your entrance will depend upon a number of factors: existing architecture, use and position.

Those fortunate enough to live in a house with a strong style will have to work closely with that, or contrast it boldly. For instance, in a glass-fronted modernist house, where an entrance is hard to define, a glass and stainless-steel pergola may be the best solution, yet this would not sit well fronting an old cottage.

Such structures are almost always bespoke and require custom fabrication by a company such as Stainless Steel Solutions (s3i.co.uk),

who also make cabling systems for contemporary trellises and pergolas.

Some features, such as mock-Georgian porches and windows are hard to work with, in which case the liberal use of climbers may be the best option! The addition of a pergola or porch over a doorway thickens the connection, creating a transitional area – not quite in, not quite out. Ready-made pergolas can be bought from garden centres, but you may get a better result by using a specialist supplier or contractor, try Roger Gladwell (rogergladwell.co.uk) or for metal fabrications, PMF Designs (p-m-f.co.uk). When choosing a pergola, be aware that

the timber should be FSC certified and of adequate size, many cheaper ones are too small and will look insubstantial. Make sure posts are at least 100x100mm section (up to 200x200mm can be used) with cross beams of at least 100x50mm, preferably 150-200x50mm. Big and simple is more effective than small and fussy. Minimum headroom of 2200mm should be planned for, depending upon other factors, such as window or roof gutter heights.

Defining the space

Continuous paving lends itself to the development of an 'outdoor room' area, preferably adjacent to the rear

of the house. Such spaces can be defined by walls that mimic those of the house, in the form of raised beds or planters, which can be of timber, brick, blocks rendered and painted, or washed with mineral pigments. Colours selected can tone with, or contrast those of the house.

Raised beds are especially effective when combined with a pergola, which gives vertical framing to the space. In this way, deciduous climbers can give dappled overhead shade in the summer, without blocking winter light into the house.

Planting should provide a combination of architectural structure and flowers/scent from climbers, shrubs, herbs and perennials. Grasses add drama and a sense of movement, whilst pots and tubs lend a seasonal display.

The final touch is the sound of running water, from a wall fountain or water feature. These can be bought in garden centres, but for something unique, use a piece of 'found art' from a scrap yard or architectural salvage as the basis for a water feature; try Salvo to search for your nearest yard.____



Secluded spot

Location: West Sussex

Designer: Mark Laurence

Brief: To turn a front garden into a private space

This east-facing front garden is just a stone's throw from the beach, and is the only garden space available to the owners. 'The client wanted a design that would turn their front garden, which was publicly visible, into a private space,' explains the designer, Mark Laurence.

The owners wanted to create a secluded seating area outside their living room to provide a sense of flow between indoors and out, yet 'division was needed

between this area and the main front door, which was immediately adjacent,' says Mark. A deck and pergola was the solution to enhancing otherwise bland doorways. A raised timber bed separates the front door and the contrast is emphasised by the step up onto the deck for the seating area. The visual line from the gate to the front door is also highlighted, whilst the deck is partly screened by planting.

As the garden is by the sea, a wavy-topped timber fence was built and all structures were washed with pale blue-grey stains, which also toned with the front door colour. Planting plays a key feature in forming the structure of the garden, helping to provide further privacy as well as vibrant colour.



Toolbox

Something for the weekend

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Dual entrance

Location: West London

Designer: Charlotte Rowe

Brief: Create a contemporary garden with two separate entrances from the house

Shedding light

The finishing touch for any good transitional space is lighting. Not only will this define your outdoor space, it will also allow you to enjoy views of your garden throughout the night. Candles and oil lamps are great for special occasions and ambiance, but for practicality and style nothing beats a well-designed set of low-voltage lighting.

Paths can be lit with lights that come on as you approach, backed up by wall or overhead lights in the porch or suspended from the pergola. To borders, beds and even trees, subtle up-lighting can really dramatise space, throwing the most amazing shadows. Don't over-do it though, have a thought for your neighbours! Try Lighting for Gardens for a wide selection of contemporary options. ★

This Regency house has been completely transformed both inside and out. Its owners wanted a very contemporary look for their outside space to match the interior of the house. The site itself is long, narrow and very overlooked. It also has two entrances to the garden, one at the lower ground level of the house and another at the ground level, with the garden sitting in between the two.

Garden designer Charlotte Rowe had to address these issues when she was commissioned to transform the space. 'The first thing we did was to lower the level of the garden by about half a metre,' she explains. 'This helped to improve the privacy and give better access and views from the house.' Steps leading from the ground floor also had to be rebuilt, and a glass balustrade provides safety without blocking the views of the garden.

Lighting is also a crucial part of the design, so Charlotte approached Rebecca Weir of Light IQ to help. Pool lights placed under the pontoons illuminate the water channels, spike lighting highlights the trees, and the benches are underlit with ropes of soft lighting. 'The garden is greatly improved and feels much more private,' adds Charlotte.

SUPPLIERS

Garden designers

Charlotte Rowe
(020 7602 0660; charlotterowe.com)

Mark Laurence
(01243 533 545; marklaurence.com)

Modular Garden
(020 7619 0100;
modulargarden.com)

Materials

Marshalls
(0870 120 7474; marshalls.co.uk)

Stainless Steel Solutions
(01302 714 513; s3i.co.uk)

Pergolas

Roger Gladwell
(01728 638 372; rogergladwell.co.uk)

Hand-crafted metal furniture

PMF Designs
(01273 517 333; p-m-f.co.uk)

Salvage yards

Salvo
(salvo.co.uk)

Garden lighting

Lighting for Gardens
(01462 486 777;
lightingforgardens.com)

Light IQ
(020 8749 1900; lightiq.com)

Advice

Design of Gardens
(thedesignofgardens.com)

Forest Stewardship Council
(fsc.org)

Friends of the Earth
(020 7490 1555; foe.co.uk)



MARGARET MALKIN