

Designer Touches for Your Garage Door

Georgious Garages open the door to a whole new look

By Denise Holguin

First impressions are lasting. That's why people spend hundreds of dollars on landscape design, designer driveways, decorative lighting and fashionable paint for the exterior of their homes. Why not do the same for a home's garage door?

The garage door takes up a large portion of a home's exterior. Whether it's detached, located in the front, back or side of the home, your eye is immediately drawn to its large square or rectangular shape. Perhaps, you have trained your eye to glance quickly past that area of the home with its plain features.



Photos courtesy of Clopay Garage Doors

You no longer have to be satisfied with the drab steel structure that comes standard with the average door. If you are having a home built, be sure to ask the builder about the custom options available. You will find it will be well worth the expense. If you already have a home, you can hire a contractor to install a new door or simply install one yourself with the help of experienced friends.

Garage doors come in a variety of styles that can enhance the look of your home while increasing property value. When selecting a garage door, consider the architectural style of your home. Most homeowners have grown accustomed to accepting the standard steel door that is painted to match the home's exterior, but there are more features than paint color to consider.

Garage door manufacturers make it possible for you to "decorate" your home with custom doors. Whether your home is Colonial, Mission, Tudor or modern, there is a door that will complement your home.

Let's drive through the options that are readily available at your local home improvement stores, dealers or building-supply companies.

Insulation: Aesthetics such as windows, paint color and panel styles are important features, but if you are planning on investing in a new garage door, you should consider the level of insulation first. A well-insulated door is more energy-efficient making your garage less of an oven in the Texas summer heat and less chilling during the winter. This is especially helpful if there's a room above your garage or if you want to use your garage as a workroom. Tropical plants that you store in the garage over the winter season would also benefit from a well-insulated door.

Materials: Steel is the traditional material for garage doors and is the standard option for most new homes. It's a durable, long-lasting material that can be painted to suit your needs. In addition, wooden garage doors feature a wide variety of choices including hemlock, cedar and redwood. They can be stained or painted to match your home's style. Be sure you check with your homeowner's association for rules governing the colors and styles that can be used in your neighborhood.

If you admire the look of wood but want the durability that metal provides, many garage door manufacturers offer steel doors designed to look like wood.

Panel style: Traditional panel styles can be raised long, raised short or flush. If you want more design flair, choose a carriage-style door. They feature overlays such as crossbeams or arches and use black iron hardware such as handles or doorknockers. A carriage-style door for a two car garage can be designed to look as if the door swings open from the middle.

Windows: Glass panels can soften the look of a garage door while providing natural light inside. Most windows now come with ultraviolet (UV) protection and include features such as beveled-cut designs with platinum and brass etching. You can also choose Art Deco, Mission or Victorian-style windows.

Decorative inserts: For even more variety, select a plain window then add a decorative insert to create a custom look for your door. You can create the effect of windowpanes, a sunset, a cathedral or Colonial style. Take a look at your home's windows to help you determine an insert that would work best.

If you are not sure what to choose for your home, several companies offer the ability to build a door on their websites. You can experiment with the features and view your custom made creation on a sample home similar to your own. Visit the Door Designer at Amarr Garage Doors (www.amarr.com) or design your door at Clopay? (www.clopaydoor.com).

In terms of pricing, garage doors can range anywhere from \$200 to \$300 for the non-insulated models that you install yourself (which is probably what is on your garage already). Higher-end models with more features range from \$500 to \$1500.

No matter how you look at it, it is a worthwhile investment that will add a lasting impression to your home.

