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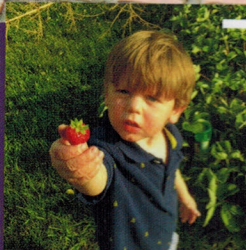
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GEORGIA'S OWN GUIDE TO GREAT GARDENING & LANDSCAPING

Enchanting Entryways

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AT FIRST SIGHT

How to create an
enchanted entry
garden you'll fall
in love with

By Helen Newling Lawson

Just because your front yard is your “public face” doesn’t mean it has to be bland and cookie-cutter.

Greeting your guests with a beautiful entry garden provides a warm welcome and lets your style shine through.

Even better, an inviting space in your front yard will push you outside at the same time as it pulls people in. Add some seating, and you’ve created a neighborhood gathering place.

UNCASE YOUR STYLE

Entry gardens frequently call to mind the classic cottage garden, bursting with blooms and enclosed by a white picket fence. But an entry garden can – and should – complement any garden style. In fact, your entry should provide a space to help visitors know what to expect from the rest of the garden and your home’s interior. Garden designer Michele Ambler of Elegant Landscapes says, “The garden’s entrance sets the stage for the experience you want to convey. It’s important that it reflect your personality while enhancing your home.”

THINK YOU DON’T HAVE ROOM?

Making space for an entry garden may mean rethinking typical layouts. Is your front yard filled with boring builder-installed shrubs? Push them away from the foundation to enclose a planting bed between your house and front walkway. Using standard-issue shrubs this way will keep the look of your yard unified with the rest of the street, create a buffer from traffic, and give your visitors a feeling they’ve stumbled onto a secret garden.

How much do you really enjoy mowing every week? Could scaling down the size of your lawn allow you to add some low-maintenance flowering shrubs or ornamental grasses?

The area around your mailbox is another great spot to dress up (just make sure you don’t obstruct your house number or the postal carrier’s access). Or, check your local ordinances to see if you can utilize the strip between your sidewalk and street.

Even planters at your front door can make a huge impact if they are large enough to be enjoyed from the street. Don’t limit yourself to a

Courtyards bridge the gap between public and private. This terrace in front of Three Bears Cottage in Vickery provides both space for socializing and a buffer from passing traffic. Despite its relatively small dimensions, homeowners Jackie and Alan Grote have more than 50 different plant varieties planted around the flagstone perimeter, including *Hosta* ‘Empress Wu’, The Rising Sun redbud (*Cercis canadensis* ‘JN2’), spiderwort (*Tradescantia*), autumn fern (*Dryopteris erythrosora*), and *Spiraea* ‘Limemound’. ‘Wintergreen’ boxwood (*Buxus sinica* var. *insularis* ‘Wintergreen’) creates a tidy enclosure.



This exuberant cottage-style entry garden perfectly complements Cassandra and Kevin McGowan's farmhouse, built in 1895. Blooms are mostly provided by old-fashioned favorites like the climbing rose, *Abelia grandiflora*, poppies (*Papaver* spp.), and *Amaryllis*. Newer introductions like the dwarf *Loropetalum*, upright Japanese plum yew (*Cephalotaxus harringtonia* 'Fastigiata') and Korean boxwood (*Buxus microphylla* var. *koreana*) provide structure and year-round interest.

few annuals – the latest container design trends make use of showy shrubs and even small trees. Or add an obelisk to get height from a flowering vine.

MAKE ROOM FOR FRIENDS

If “two’s company,” make sure they have room to walk side-by-side. Paths should be at least 42 inches wide to allow for two adults to stroll comfortably and not trip over any plants that might be spilling over the edges of the walkway.

INVITING ARBORS

The same width requirements go for structures like arbors and arches. Sized right, an arbor can bring the outdoors down to a human scale. But while the sense of enclosure is an important part of their charm, an undersized arbor feels claustrophobic rather than cozy. If your arbor frames a doorway, make it at least 18 inches higher than the doorframe.

Arbors and other covered entries foster senses of both security and anticipation. Let those feelings last by adding a bench or seating so visitors don't feel rushed.

Not sure where to place your arbor? Gordon Hayward, author of *Small Buildings, Small Gardens: Creating Gardens Around Structures*, recommends taking your cues from the structure to which the arbor is attached – normally your house or garage. Are windows spaced along a wall at 9-foot intervals? Place your arbor 9 feet from the last one. Or use it to highlight a view you want to frame, or pathway you want visitors to take. And while arbors can be freestanding, they will look strange if they are plopped down into an open space without any reason for being there.

MORE TIPS TO CREATE YOUR OWN ENCHANTING ENTRY GARDEN

- Welcome visitors to your home before they ever enter the door. Create a seamless transition by using colors and planting styles that coordinate with your interior décor.
- Provide a logical starting point. Giving visual clues to the location of entries and walkways helps to roll out the welcome mat.
- Create reasons to pause. A striking container arrangement, a fragrant flower, an intriguing texture, or even an inviting seat can help them



Get controlled chaos with these natives

Love the look of wisteria but afraid it will crush your arbor in its grasp? Try the less-exuberant native American variety, *Wisteria frutescens* 'Amethyst Falls'. Same with honeysuckle: Avoid the invasive Japanese import *Lonicera japonica* and plant *L. sempervirens* 'Major Wheeler' or *L. x heckrottii* 'Gold Flame' (a cross of *L. sempervirens* and a European variety) instead. Both will attract hummingbirds (but resist deer), and grow to a moderate size on twining stems. Crossvine (*Bignonia capreolata*) is another showy choice native to the Southeast. Keeping it trained to your arbor will allow you to enjoy the blooms, which normally grow too high to be seen.



➤ This entry area at the Jessup-Atkinson House in Madison combines form and function with wide, smooth brick pathways and clipped English boxwood hedges to clearly guide visitors; ample yet stylish porch lighting for safety; and bright planters filled with begonias for a warm welcome. Ferns soften the lines and Gardenia flanking the entry provide a welcoming scent.

◀ Not every entryway is to your front door. In the author's garden, a sturdy arbor with benches lets you know there is more to explore beyond the landscaped area, and provides a place to either enter or stop to enjoy the view of the woodlands beyond. The arbor is deliberately free of vines, as it provides needed structure and focus to the "wall of green" behind it.



◀ In Craig and Sue Rattleff's garden, eastern snowball (*Viburnum opulus* 'Sterile') frame an antique archway, giving a hint of how both the shrub and other salvaged pieces are used as accents through the rest of the garden. *Clematis* 'Pink Champagne' grows over the arch, and *Azalea* 'Renee Michelle', and purple Japanese roof iris (*Iris tectorum*) can be seen beyond.



▲ Even little used entries can become an attractive focal point. Jack and Russell Huber turned a shady basement entrance in Brookhaven into a spectacular tableau, framing an ivy- and grass-filled planter with variegated Solomon's seal (*Polygonatum falcatum* 'Variegatum'), *Hydrangea paniculata* 'Limelight', and a lush *Clematis armandii* vine trained on a trellis over the doorway.

▲ A gate on your arbor will create a sense of mystery and privacy; an unobstructed entry will be more open and inviting. Or get the best of both worlds with a design like this moon gate, which perfectly frames a view of a stunning smokebush (*Cotinus*).

(and you) make the transition from a hectic journey to your restful haven.

- For a fun touch, welcome feathered and four-legged visitors with birdhouses and water sources (like a neighborhood "dog bar" for parched pooches).
- Since all eyes are on your entry, make sure it's worthy of scrutiny. Don't plant more than you can handle or choose low-maintenance options. Keeping your entry garden looking good can also make neighbors more tolerant of your expression of individuality.

GET A LUSH LOOK WITH VINES

Whether you drape them over an arbor, train them onto a trellis, or just let them sprawl along a fence, climbing plants are a classic choice for enhancing an entry, and can fit a range of styles from cottage garden to formal. Here are a few choices to consider:

- Climbing roses, *Clematis*, Carolina jessamine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*), and jasmine (*Jas-*



minum spp.) all grow well in Georgia, and can even be mixed together for longer or more intense blooming displays.

- Dutchman's pipe (*Aristolochia* spp.) is less well known, but has long-lasting blooms and is a host plant for the pipevine swallowtail butterfly.
- Hop vine (*Humulus lupulus*) is the source for a key ingredient for brewing beer, but is also a perennial with attractive foliage and light green cone-like flowers in late summer.
- Scarlet runner bean (*Phaseolus coccineus*) bridges the gap between ornamental and edible, with showy red or pink flowers followed by long pods. Harvest the beans young if you plan to eat them.
- *Mandevilla* can be grown as an annual or cut back and overwintered inside above Zone 8.

Helen Newling Lawson is a freelance writer, marketing professional and master gardener in Forsyth County, GA. She also hails from shale-laden central New Jersey.