

an inviting approach welcomes visitors



Figure 1



Figure 3

There are generally several ways to approach things in life. The same is true in residential architecture and landscaping. Take entrance walkways, for example. Some don't waste any time. They beat a path right to the front door in one straight shot. Other walkways take their time and tend to beat around the bush, figuratively and literally. Still others create an air of

on approximately 80 percent of residential properties. A straight-arrow walkway from the curb to the front door can be boring and can detract from the overall appeal of one's home if not well planned. To make a straight walkway more appealing, consider incorporating contrasting surface materials. Consider edging materials such as brick, slate, flagstone, pea gravel, or

or arrange the bricks into an interesting pattern, such as a herringbone or a basketweave design.

For added interest, create a curved landing pad at the front door (Fig. 2). Raise the bricks one brick-level high to create a shallow step and then curve the front edge of the bricks to create a semi-circular pattern. Be sure to extend this raised-brick area beyond the door surround on both sides to allow space for two symmetrically placed flower pots or urns. Blooming plants or fresh greenery in these decorative containers add an artistic touch to the front entrance and make the raised brick area more dramatic (Fig. 2). This symmetrical anchoring of the front door surround is very important because with a straight walkway, the front door becomes a strong focal point.

By gently sloping the front of your yard down toward the sidewalk, you create the opportunity to have one or three shallow steps begin your walkway (Fig. 3). These steps can be of the same material as your walkway, or done in a contrasting material for added visual appeal. The design of

do come in

mystery and invite discovery. Let's explore some creative and innovative entrance walkways and courtyards found on residential properties around Houston.

THE STRAIGHT WALKWAY

This walkway is by far the easiest and most economical to install, so it is poured or laid without hesitation

low lying plant material such as monkey grass. Brick is generally the most popular edging material along cement walkways. When edging with bricks, line both sides of the walkway with the bricks laid horizontally along the sides (Fig. 1). If you choose to use only bricks for the walkway, consider running the bricks lengthwise in a running bond,

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Figure 2



Figure 4



Figure 5

the steps can be curved or straight. For further interest, consider adding a low retaining wall of the same material beyond the sides of the steps to increase the importance of the walkway.

CURVED, WINDING WALKWAYS

A curved or winding walkway gives a home charm and charisma and is generally the most appealing because it looks so natural in the environment. There are several appealing aspects to this type of walkway.

First, if the walkway can have at least one step beginning at the sidewalk before it begins its curve, it will lend a greater sense of importance to the path. Be sure to plan for identical groupings of low-growing shrubbery and/or seasonal plant material on both sides of the entrance to the walkway, and then repeat the same seasonal or flowering plant material in beds along the house. The eye loves to discover flowering repetition in the landscape. Notice how there are three levels of plant materials in figure 4: Asiatic jasmine at the sidewalk level, low growing

boxwood with seasonal plant material at the entrance to the walkway, and then the same plant material repeat in a long, low bed along the front of the house.

Another way to create charm and character with a walkway is to wind the path around a tree (Fig. 5). The longer it takes for your eye to follow the path to the front door, the more interest is created. Be sure the front door and its architectural surround are attractive and inviting, for it is the culmination of your visual journey.

GARDEN WALKWAYS

A walkway that is especially delightful is one that is partially hidden from plain view; that has some twists and turns before delivering you to the front door. Note the home in figure 6, which has a deeply recessed front entranceway. These types of front entrances can be difficult to work with because the front door is not featured due to the recess. A straight walkway is generally not a good solution for this style of façade



Figure 6



Figure 7

because it only increases the perceived depth of the recessed front door.

But see in figure 6 how the recessed front entrance was given a full featured, creative and innovative landscape design solution with some interesting twists and turns. The homeowners here designed a lovely garden setting around two converging pathways (contrasted with brick edging), which stretch leisurely towards the house. They creatively and thoughtfully included several nice features along this garden pathway to delight the visual and kinesthetic senses.

Generally, a pathway should

always terminate at an interesting architectural or landscape feature. (Fig. 6) Notice that the main walkway here leads up to and terminates at the front window, a dominate architectural feature on the façade because it is not recessed. Aiding the window's prominence is its generous size, traditional shutters and well-manicured hedge of white azaleas anchoring it to the walkway. The path then turns you to the left (Fig. 7) and surprises you with a graceful garden bench, nestled quietly in front of another neatly clipped hedge of white azaleas. Surrounding this delightful garden feature are

permanent and seasonal plantings, crape myrtle trees which add sculptural interest and large pots of flowers and foliage. Turning to the right, one arrives at last at the front door, which no longer seems lost in a deep recess along the façade, but purposely planned to shelter the garden visitor.

SIDE ENTRANCE WALKWAYS

Another walkway challenge is the walkway that is located in a non-central location, such as off to one side, on the front façade. In figures 8 and 9, we see an L-shaped residence, which creates the opportunity for an entrance courtyard. With the walkway leading straight into the courtyard, it is important to have a prominent stone gate entrance in order to hold one's attention on the right side of the house. The stone entrance columns are capped with carved stone horses' heads which also frame the massive carved stone cartouche over the front door. These features plus the cement walkway leading directly up to it emphasize this entranceway and make it dramatic. Finishing touches are the matching stone urns in front of the foliage-covered walls and the iron gate doors at the entrance to the courtyard.

If you have a tired landscape or

your house has an outdated façade, it can be given new life and greater visual appeal by simply changing the direction or adding to the design of your walkway. Whether adding a curved landing pad of contrasting surface materials at your front door or curving, meandering and planting your entranceway, these features will make your walkway warm, personal and inviting, and add long-term value to your home and property. ■

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Figures 8 and 9

