

HOW TO HELP YOUR CUSTOMERS PICK THE PERFECT GARAGE DOOR



By Kelly Roberson

Editor's note: Earlier this year, we noticed an excellent Better Homes and Gardens article titled "Gorgeous Paint Ideas to Upgrade Your Garage" by Kelly Roberson. It was so good, we hired Kelly to help door dealers learn some basic design tips for consulting with customers. After collecting seven photos contributed by manufacturers, we asked Kelly to offer a critique and tips about how each door worked with the architecture of each home.

Even if you didn't go to design school, you can still learn and use some simple artistic principles to guide your clients in their garage door decisions. These seven homes offer some great lessons in choosing the most beautiful garage door for every home.



Overhead Door Courtyard Collection 161 steel door, courtesy of Overhead Door.

Inspired accents

Design lesson: Look to the accents on the home to select the right details for the garage door. Here, a steeply pitched roof and a trio of dormers on the structure offer a jumping-off place for garage door selection.

What works: The gentle curve of the garage door windows mimics the more exaggerated curves in the dormer windows. A low-key white hue on the window trim pops up again on the outer trim of the garage doors, which provides color consistency—an important design decision when choosing garage doors.

Extra touches that matter: Garage doors are key elements in creating enviable curb appeal. The darker hue for the inset panels on these doors—a richer, deeper shade of the garage’s main color—offers a visual grounding element that prevents the doors from getting lost. In addition, traditionally inspired hinges and handles firmly root the doors in the Cape Cod design era of the home.

Repeated patterns and elements

Design lesson: Proportions and materials should play a distinct role in garage door style decisions.

What works: The design choices for the garage door are based on the dominant shapes and materials on this cottage-inspired house. The rectangular panes in the home’s windows repeat in the garage door windows. Simple white on the doors and trim helps draw attention to the home’s main color focal point—the visual variety in the brick patterning. If the door’s design were more complex, the home’s overall appearance would be too busy.

Extra touches that matter: Notice the repeating rectangular pattern on the insets of the garage doors that echoes the shapes in the home’s windows. The door hardware and light above the door also match nicely. Bringing together cohesive visual accents on the garage door and house helps bump up the curb appeal.

Clopay Coachman Collection steel door, courtesy of Clopay.



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Complexity, simplified

Design lesson: An uncomplicated garage door design can simplify an exterior that contains competing elements.

What works: There are plenty of materials and colors on this home's front façade. Adding anything more on the garage door would make the overall façade visually confusing. Instead, a simple wood-grain finish pulls out the darkest colors in the brick pattern, while the horizontal rectangular panels repeat the mid-line horizontal bricks on the home.

Extra touches that matter: Most garage door consultants probably have similar design situations—and similar confusion about what works best. Try this: Pick a mid-range color for the garage door—here, a shade lighter would have worked as well—to keep the door from competing too much with the rest of the structure. Larger windows on the garage door are another option that might prevent the door's proportions from being overwhelming.

C.H.I. 4216 steel door with Accents Woodtones, courtesy of C.H.I.



Amarr By Design Lowry wood door, courtesy of Entrematic.

Hidden inspiration

Design lesson: Many transitionally inspired homes have a lot going on—varying influences, many extra design touches. Pick just one or two elements to add to the garage doors so that you don't bury the home in colors and details.

What works: The garage doors pick up on and repeat the series of shapes in the geometric bump-out on the house—two rectangular windows topped by a semi-circle. For the doors, that equals two panels topped by a gently curving series of windows.

Extra touches that matter: Instead of turning to the trim for an accent color, the garage door consultant here looked to the roof. The subtle green adds a welcome but ever-so-slight variation in the mostly monochromatic color scheme. To reduce the level of visual clutter in a similar home, consider eliminating the cross-hatch details on the doors.

Better balance

Design lesson: Before you choose a garage door, take a look at the home and door as a whole package. Assess the size and color of the garage door compared to the rest of the home.

What works: The horizontal brick on this façade offers patterning that's picked up in the garage door's panels. The black door works well with the other black elements, but in this case it might be too much.

Extra touches that matter: A very dark or striking hue can be overwhelming for a large garage door. For example, if the garage door is large relative to the rest of your home, a bold dominant color can detract from other appealing features of the home. Instead, aim for color balance. For example, try swapping the door color with the trim color—black trim balanced by a cream garage door—to remedy any imbalance in the front façade's design, giving welcome focus to the front door.

Wayne Dalton Classic Steel 8300, courtesy of Wayne Dalton.



Raynor StyleView aluminum doors, courtesy of Raynor.

Simplify the approach

Design lesson: Keep the garage door simple to create overall curb appeal that's cohesive and stylistically on target.

What works: The garage door windows repeat the shapes of the home's windows as well as the symmetry of the dual vertical window panels. Yet the home's many exterior features and competing rooflines might be better complemented by a simpler design in the garage doors.

Extra touches that matter: The garage door consultant shows a deft hand in a color combination to tie the exterior together. A creamy trim plays accent to the more dominant taupe; together both colors complement the multi-hued brick insets at the entryway and the lower half of the façade.

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Style spotlight

Design lesson: For a home that's very specific in its style—here, contemporary—use the garage doors to complement, not contrast, other aesthetic choices.

What works: Both the shape and color of the individual panes in this trio of garage doors serve to reinforce the distinct design ethos of this home. Opaque panels offer privacy to the garage space, while the slim dividers maintain the sleek window trim throughout the exterior.

Extra touches that matter: Solid doors would have also reinforced the streamlined and minimalist façade of this home.

Haas 360 Residential Aluminum door, courtesy of Haas Door.



Kelly Roberson, based in Des Moines, Iowa, is an accomplished writer and project manager who has written on home design topics for a variety of national publications including Better Homes and Gardens, Country Home, Before & After, Kitchen Makeovers, and many more. ■

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