

New garage doors add curb appeal

Designs run gamut from simple to wow

Sadie Jo Smokey

The Arizona Republic

Jul. 9, 2005 12:00 AM

It's the final frontier of home improvement. After remodeling the kitchen, adding a bathroom, replacing the roof and painting the house, what's left? That big, bare, ignored and abused garage door.

Magazines rarely mention the garage door when listing ways to improve the appearance of a home. Landscaping and sprucing up the entryway usually top the list, but a new garage door goes a long way in adding curb appeal.

"On average, the square footage of the garage door is one-third of the elevation of the home. It's the cheapest way to do a remodel," said Joe Engel of Cookson Door Sales of Arizona in Tempe.

Overhead garage doors haven't changed much since they were invented in 1921. But in the last few years, the doors have come a long way in terms of appearance and integrity. First United Door Technologies, firstudt.com, a Tempe-based manufacturer, offer doors in a variety of styles.

Their Web sites have design tools to help homeowners find a door that fits their style, whether it's an architectural wonder, a simple door with short or long panels or doors with decorative hardware, arches and glass panels.

"A lot of people are reinvesting in their home and they want the front to look nicer," said Mike Dryer of Cookson Door Sales of Arizona. "Ten or 15 years ago, when they had their garage doors installed, they went with what was standard. Now there are so many options, different window looks."

Garage doors can be simple or custom made, with prices ranging from \$750 to \$5,000. Expect to spend as much on a garage door as you would on a new refrigerator, retailers say.

In June, Grant and Jan Mills of Scottsdale replaced two garage doors on their 17-year-old home that were cracking and peeling. It took just half a day to have the doors installed.

"The doors were old, heavy wood that had dry rot," Grant Mills said. "We wanted a good-quality insulated door, so we picked out something that was a little heavy duty. Our garage faces south so it's in the sun all the time."

Raised-panel steel doors are standard on most Valley homes, local retailers said. But wood plank and carriage house-style doors that look like they swing out to open are gaining in popularity.

Both those styles roll up overhead, like a standard garage door, but don't resemble the dominant feature of so many cookie-cutter subdivision homes.

"When you've got a home that is worth more than \$500,000, you have to have something better than a raised-panel steel door on it," said Jeff Jella of First United Door Technologies. "People are expecting more. The garage door is the focal point of their entry."

Homeowners should check with their homeowner associations to find out whether they are allowed to replace garage doors with a different style, retailers say. Many garage-door companies will work with homeowners to help them find a door that is approved by their communities.

"When I bought my home I wanted to upgrade the garage door to one that was better insulated," Engel said. "I showed (the HOA) different pictures so they could see that the door looked similar to the other ones on the street."