

Rising and shining

Garage doors aren't boring anymore: They're part of an integrated home design

Garage door designs have become much more than the plain, cookie cutter styles. Garage doors take inspiration from a variety of sources – from the American farmhouse to a European design. As garages play a bigger role in home design — with three-car garages practically standard in some neighborhoods — the doors are changing, too.

Gone are the days of the architecturally bland, cookie-cutter garage doors. Such doors have been replaced with ones that look like entrances to old carriage houses, barns, even castles. The doors boast leaded-glass windows, raised panels and an assortment of decorative hardware. And though they may look like doors that swing open, they roll up with an automatic opener.

A lot more attention is being given to the design and appearance of the interior of a garage, and that draws attention to the garage door. An attached garage represents a minimum of 30 percent of the visual portion of a home, depending on where the garage is facing. In the majority of homes, it faces the street. Yet, traditionally, doors were plain, cookie-cutter garage doors. They were functional and safe but not necessarily aesthetically pleasing to the overall home.

That's changing. Now you can find doors that better complement a home's design, whether it offers Old World charm or contemporary styling. There is new stuff all the time as the industry realizes how much curb appeal a garage door adds. Carriage-house doors were some of the most popular on the market. People want the garage door to match the entry door or to pick up on the home's windows or gables on the house. Now you can make them more distinct and more personalized.

Historically, homeowners would spend \$2,000 or \$3,000 or more on the entry door of a home. Then they'd spend \$300 on the garage door even though it represented more frontage. For carriage house-style doors, prices for a single-car garage start at \$500 and go to about \$1,800 for a steel door. For wooden carriage-house doors, prices per door are in the \$2,000-to-\$3,000 range. Some custom wood doors — mahogany, for example — can run as high as \$7,000 per door.

Most people use their garage doors to enter their homes every day — while rarely using the expensive front entry. Steel is the biggest seller, popular because of its low maintenance and its warranties.