

A Grand Entrance

Enhance your front door with fabulous pots and plants.

By Ellen Riley



At the Pategas residence in Winter Park, Florida, sculptural agaves are the stars in simple terra-cotta pots. The container color complements the roof tiles and is a nice contrast to the cool green of the plants.



In an Asheville, North Carolina, home, the large container placed to one side of the door is planted in a colorful, casual manner.

Welcome. It's a sociable Southern attitude we all try to convey in our homes. Expressing this hospitable point of view begins at the front door, where function and style come together with containers.

Size and Style

Pots of plants can embellish the front door or define the path to it. Decide the purpose of your containers; then choose the best size and design. A common mistake is using ones that are too small. Kristin and Stephen Pategas, owners of Hortus Oasis in Winter Park, Florida, offer these tips.

- Start with cardboard boxes. Get several sizes, and place them where your containers will be. This helps you determine the correct scale.
- If you're placing multiple pots in the same vicinity, vary their heights and widths. Use cardboard boxes as stand-ins, or fill plastic trash bags with newspaper for the same effect.

Define the dominant materials, paint colors, and established plantings used in and around your home.

"Complement your house and the materials used in the landscape, and repeat them when you can," Kristin says. "If you've got terra-cotta roof tiles, then terra-cotta pots are nice."

Choices

Look to your home's facade for planting cues. "If it's a cottage-style home, find a broad mix of plants and create

a small garden in that container," Kristin says. A home with more contemporary lines lends itself to containers with only one or two plants that are architectural in character. "Choose something with strong texture, or use a standout specimen plant," Stephen says.

Expert Advice



Containers lining a path can direct guests to the entrance. Philip Morris, a Birmingham gardener, shares his wisdom and experience on making this treatment effective and easy.

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Three's Not a Crowd

The placement of pots, especially at an entrance, can be frustrating and tricky. A common approach is to just flank the front door with a pair of containers and be done with it. While this is okay, consider adding a third container. Kristin advises people to employ a classic design technique: "Always put things in triplets."

If pots are on each side of the front door, place the third on a step or the edge of a walkway to complete the shape. Or place two containers at the edge of a landing, adding the third element to one side of the door.