

HOW TO MAKE YOUR HOUSE FEEL INVITING

We all want our homes to feel inviting—to beckon in guests with a thoughtfully designed façade and charm passersby with undeniable curb appeal. Luckily, whether you're gearing up for a major building project or seeking simple ideas for enhancing your home's exterior, there are a variety of ways to make an abode appear more welcoming. Here, Everett Schram, president and founder of the Baltimore-based architecture firm J. E. Schram Architect, shares six ways to add warmth and architectural interest to a house.

CREATE A DEFINED ENTRY. The most critical element to creating a warm and inviting home, according to Schram, is greeting people architecturally by defining where the entry is. "It is critical to let visitors know where to go upon exiting their car (or chosen mode of transportation)," he says. This can be done in a multitude of ways, from a bold front door color to a gracious porch or even a lantern on an entry gate to a courtyard. If all roads—or sightlines—lead to the garage, he recommends downplaying that element with darker colors, cantilevered pergolas, or even by turning the driveway into strips of paving and grass. "Do whatever it takes to put the emphasis back on the person, rather than their car," he advises.

SELECT LIGHTING THAT ADDS CHARACTER. While decorative lighting will add charm to your entry, Schram is quick to note that less is more. "I'd rather have one beautifully crafted lantern with great details than two of another," he says, adding that his go-to source is New Orleans-based Bevolo Lighting. "There's something about a gas lantern flickering beside or atop a door that just adds timeless elegance to the front of a home...like the perfect piece of heirloom jewelry." If gas can't be used, Schram suggests using an Edison bulb, which will add a similar touch of warmth to the light. And when opting for one lantern to the side of a door, place it on the latch-side. "This is historically where a candle lantern would've been hung upon entering one's home."

USE DETAILS FROM YOUR REGION OR ARCHITECTURAL STYLE. When making architectural decisions, "It's always best to begin with a study of the historic, vernacular traditions of where you live," Schram says. "Look at the style of homes that are iconic to your region and climate. They will tell you a lot." He also recommends looking at the characteristics of your home's architectural style and considering those traditions. "When you think of something as ubiquitous as an Arts and Crafts bungalow, you will notice consistent elements, such as a front porch. But each region had their own versions of it. In the south, the use of deeper overhangs, placing the houses on piers, and the addition of higher ceilings all help counteract the intense heat of the area." Connecting to your place, Schram says, will make your home feel rooted, as if it belongs and has always been there.



LANDSCAPE ACCORDINGLY. "A home's landscaping is often tied to its architectural style, and also its language," Schram says. Here again, it's important to make the entry the focal point. When choosing plantings and considering your overall landscape design, Schram recommends being mindful of where you live, and making the simplest accommodations to your site conditions. "Many old homes sat plainly on a lawn with no ground plantings," he says. "This isn't for everyone, but sometimes it can be as easy as a couple of trees and a path. Frame the entry, landscape as a supporting element, and remember that native or indigenous species require less overall work."

ADD A POP OF COLOR. The front door is the perfect place to make a memorable first impression, according to Schram. "It's like the pocket square on a man's jacket or a bright shoe with a little black dress. It's often the first thing noticed, the item most remembered, and when done properly, the perfect complimenting accent." Once the color palette of the house's body has been selected, it's time to choose the front door's hue. "Even if it's not unique to the other doors and windows, its selection is of the utmost priority," Schram says. Then, elements like shutters and window sashes will need to coordinate with everything else that's been chosen. "And come on, what is better than a true, operable shutter in a great color?"

BRING A BIT OF YOURSELF OUTSIDE. Like your wardrobe, the choices you make to the exterior of your home should reflect you, your tastes, and your sensibilities, Schram notes, adding that this will help it feel natural and welcoming to you, as well as your guests. "It's that initial embrace visitors receive upon arrival, and a little glimpse that strangers get of you as they pass by," he says. "If you have a favorite color, incorporate it on the house or in the flowers. If you're casual, let your porch furnishings and accessories depict that. If you like things that aren't found everywhere, find the perfect light or have a custom door designed so that your home is distinctly your own."

TSG Tip 275 from Everett Schram of J. E. Schram Architect in Baltimore, Maryland. J. E. Schram Architect is featured in The Scout Guide Baltimore & Annapolis.