

AT HOME

Having a front porch will add to your home's design value

By Merlisa Lawrence Corbett
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More than a mere passage from public life to private dwelling, a front porch, if designed well, serves as the ultimate curb appeal.

"A front porch adds design value to a house," said David Lynn, president of Wakefield Building Group, which has constructed numerous front-porch additions in Northern Virginia, many in the historic Aurora Hills section of Arlington.

Lynn said he gets requests for porch additions and renovations mostly from people who own older colonials lacking in architectural features on the front.

From two-story antebellum styles to small extensions of the home's primary roof, porches come in all styles and sizes. What makes a porch stand out is the materials chosen for the floor, ceilings, rails, columns and steps.

Floors vary from inexpensive concrete to exotic hardwood. "These days we are using more tropical woods, such as mahogany or ipe. They are more expensive, but long-lasting, more weather-resistant and look great," Lynn said.

Wooden beaded-board ceilings used to be common in front porches.



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PHOTOS BY ANDREW HARNIK/EXAMINER

"My parents own an authentic early-1900s house with a porch, so I know what the real thing looks like," he said. He suggests using plywood instead of hardwood, to get the

same effect for less. But for rails and banisters, Lynn said real wood is the only way to go.

Rod Caulkins, president of Caulkins Construction in Manas-

sas, is a carpenter by trade and said what makes a front porch special are details in the woodwork. "Some of the most beautiful porches have vaulted gables with elaborate trim. I love the wrap-around porches with gazebos at one end."

Caulkins, who lives in Montclair in Prince William County, enjoys his own front porch, a simple white structure that runs the length of the front of his house. "I love sitting out there in the morning, sipping a cup of coffee and reading the paper," he said.

His porch has a standard concrete floor, which he painted white, with a playground sand mixture to make the surface less slippery when wet. "You can buy the sand yourself or ask the paint store to add some," he said.

Chris Quinn, manager of Patio Place in Chantilly, said furnishing a front porch depends on the size of the porch. Bistro sets are perfect for smaller porches. For larger ones, "most people opt for benches

Resources

- » Wakefield Building Group
wakefieldbuildinggroup.com
- » Caulkins Construction Co. Inc.
caulkinsconstruction.com
- » Patio Place patiolplace.com



or double cast aluminium sliders," Quinn said. Each year the selection of outdoor fabrics increases.

"Most are made with a membrane that separates the outer fabric from the inner core so that when the fabric gets wet, the cushion doesn't soak all the way through," Quinn said.

"But even with treated outdoor fabric, if you want to keep them longer, bring them in during the winter."

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