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FROM PAINT SCHEMES TO PLANTINGS TO ENTRY PORCHES, WE'VE GOT **CURB-APPEAL UPGRADE IDEAS** FOR EVERY BUDGET

BY KATE KARAM

LAYER ON CLASSIC DETAILS

Beneath the gray faux-stone siding and front-and-center mudroom addition that this 1940s beach cottage, in Lewes, Delaware, used to have, designer Jeff West saw the simple lines of the colonial-era houses he admires. Ditching the mudroom, he skim-coated the exterior and created a period-appropriate portico supported by simple round columns. More quality finishes, such as a cedar-shake roof, copper gutters, and hinged raised-panel shutters, add substance to the little house. For the symmetrical garden, which is bisected by a formal brick walkway, West chose Japanese holly over similar-leaved but slow-growing boxwood, achieving this lavish landscape in just three years.

IDEAS TO STEAL

PORTICO: Refined additions, like fiberglass columns and fish-scale cedar shingles, enhance the new portico. Similar to shown: Shingles, \$6 per sq. ft.; builddirect.com. Entry columns, from \$250 each; menards.com

LANDSCAPING: Pruning the holly shrubs to varying heights creates an undulating effect. Weatherproof fiberglass window boxes and pots create spots for colorful flowers in the all-green landscape. Nantucket window box, \$110; gomayne.com

WALKWAY: A mortared walkway of aged brick replaced a curved decomposed-granite path. Cut costs by using thin veneer brick on an existing concrete walk or building a mortarless path with concrete pavers. Similar to shown: Brookstown Red Thin Series veneer bricks, \$2.88 per sq. ft.; pinehallbrick.com. Fulton Red concrete pavers, \$5 per sq. ft.; lowes.com



ABOVE: Removing a picket fence (BEFORE) opened up the front yard to a densely planted symmetrical garden with a pair of weeping cherry trees.



LEFT: A revived front porch adds a sense of spaciousness and ample streetside charm to what had been a rundown rental (BEFORE).



BEFORE

MAKE IT WELCOMING

This new-old Colonial Revival, in Palo Alto, California, had plenty of appeal, with its impressive portico, beefy trim, cedar shingles and roof shakes, and well-placed windows. But not until new owners enlisted designer Carolyn Woods to add billowy symmetrical garden borders and a wide-swinging gate did the place come to life. Out came trees that had hidden the house from view. In went 4-foot-wide beds edged with boxwood and tall 'Iceberg' rose standards, with unfussy perennials, such as yarrow, lavender, and catmint, spilling onto the brick walkway. More sheared boxwood crisply wraps the yard and is tucked into vase-style cast-stone urns. Setting off all this greenery is a 3-foot-tall square-picket fence with an arch-top gate that swings open to point the way to the front door.

IDEAS TO STEAL

FENCE AND GATE: Replacing a hedge with a square-picket fence created an enclosure without dominating the landscape. For a similar style in easy-care vinyl, look for pickets and posts with steel cores and frames to ensure the gate won't sag. Similar to shown: Chestnut Hill cellular PVC picket fence, \$120 per linear foot; walpolewoodworkers.com

FRONT DOOR: The cool-gray stain on the house's individually applied cedar shingles gets a lift from a pale-blue door color. Semitransparent stain: Driftwood Gray, \$34 per gallon; cabotstain.com. Paint: A Capella, about \$70 per gallon; c2paint.com

ENTRY LIGHTS: Three-light lantern sconces flanking the door and a five-sided pendant hung from the ceiling illuminate the landing and highlight the leaded-glass fanlight and sidelights. A pair of tall candle lanterns at the base of the door adds a romantic glow. Similar to shown: Livex Lighting's Westover series, \$300 and up; wayfair.com. Lanterns: Malta, bronze finish, \$120 each; potterybarn.com



BEFORE

RESTORE THE PORCH

It didn't take long for the new owners to decide to tear open the enclosed front porch of this late-1800s farmhouse, in Wilmette, Illinois. Happily, they found the original posts and windows all in good condition. Working with architect Suzie Van Cleave, the couple commissioned new railings that incorporate flatsawn balusters inspired by those of local historic houses, as well as a design detail at the gable-end's peak that repeats the motif. The porch's fascia board, having rotted over time, was replaced with beefier, wider stock to balance the heft of the porch. Finally, the owners splashed the place in Sherwin-Williams's Bolero. Though not a historical color for the area's late-19th-century farmhouses, red was often used on barns of the period. Says Van Cleave, "It seemed appropriate—and a little ironic, since it's in a dense urban neighborhood."

IDEAS TO STEAL

PORCH RAILING: Elaborate flatsawn balusters are often seen on Victorian-era houses; the simple treatment here, interspersed with plain 2x2s, fits this farmhouse. Look for off-the-shelf flatsawn designs, starting at \$20 each at vintagewoodworks.com. Or create your own custom pattern with a jigsaw; see how at thisoldhouse.com/mar2015.

GABLE DETAIL: Van Cleave added the triangular pediment at the top, repeating the detail used in the balusters and mounting the piece on brackets. This floating detail was installed over existing vents, allowing them to work unimpeded. Estimated cost: \$1,000. Effect: priceless.

PORCH SKIRT: Evidence of critters nesting under the porch showed this had been a cozy place for animals to hole up. Arches cut from 3/4-inch marine-grade plywood replaced decayed vertical slats, echoing the curve of the window casing and keeping the area airy and open.

NICE CURB APPEAL!



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PHOTOS: COURTESY OF VANCLEAVE ARCHITECTURE + DESIGN; (OPPOSITE PAGE) KEN GUTMAKER; (OPENING SPREAD) ROGER FOLEY



LEFT: The handsome house lacked a garden frame (BEFORE); now, sturdy shrubs form the backbone of an English-cottage-style garden.

UNCOVER A CHARMER

Cheery colors and streamlined landscaping turned this once dreary teardown, in Austin, Texas, into the coolest house on the block. Builder Royce Flournoy preserved most of the 1939 cottage's original wood siding and updated it with fresh paint. All the limestone chimney needed to restore its textured look was a good power-washing and a new cap. Seeking privacy on this wide corner lot, Flournoy enclosed a section of yard with a western red cedar fence, running the 1-by-2-inch slats horizontally to echo the clapboard siding. Playing off the original trim beneath the porch windows, a new front door features a lower panel detail that's an exact match. The limestone-gravel terrace edged with 'Winter Gem' boxwood is water-wise and easy-care.

IDEAS TO STEAL

PAINT: Flournoy got the warm modern-cottage look he wanted with a classic combo of chocolate-brown amped up with a zingy green. Paint: Iron Mountain (body) and Pale Avocado (louvered shutters), about \$50 per gallon; benjaminmoore.com. Gypsum (trim), \$38 per gallon; ppgpittsburghpaints.com

SLATTED DETAILS: The new fence is made from 1-by-2-inch clear western red cedar that will fade to a soft gray similar in hue to the limestone chimney. The front-porch swing is made from fade-proof recycled plastic. Similar to shown: Cedar slats, 50 cents per linear foot; lowes.com. Highwood Weatherly 4-Foot Porch Swing, \$329; amazon.com

LANDSCAPING: Rectangular slabs of poured concrete set into the crushed-gravel terrace are a budget answer to a stone-slab walkway. For a tree-lined lawn in a hot, humid climate like Austin's, look for a true-dwarf cultivar that is notably shade tolerant and requires less mowing. Amerishade St. Augustine grass, \$225 per pallet (covers 450 sq. ft.); krturfgrass.com

BELOW: Rundown and smothered in shrubs (BEFORE), this cottage got a modern face-lift with an inviting porch.



BEFORE



PHOTOS: COURTESY OF TEXAS CONSTRUCTION COMPANY; (OPPOSITE PAGE) COURTESY OF BENNETT FRANK MCCARTHY ARCHITECTS



LEFT: New front steps and a central path provide easy access to the front door, which had been hidden by a low roof and a walled-off porch (BEFORE).



BEFORE

LET IN THE LIGHT

Having to scrunch down to see out front windows blocked by a low-pitched roof gets old fast. Just ask the owners of this 1920s house, a once dim tiny Cape, in Takoma Park, Maryland, that they transformed into a Craftsman-style cottage. Looking for more square footage, the homeowners turned to architect Shawn Buehler to add on in back and give the front rooflines an overhaul too. The result is an open porch with a gable-end roof featuring a unique slatted design that echoes the porch railings. Local codes restricted the new porch to a depth of 9 feet, but the airy design makes it feel larger—and brighter, too. To add interest to the faux-slate roof, Buehler created a patterned inlay accent. A house that was "sort of weird" is now a storybook showstopper, right at home in a historic neighborhood of bungalows.

IDEAS TO STEAL

PORCH: The roof is a take on a classic Craftsman side-gable design, with railings and an open gable detail constructed of 5/4-by-4-inch wood slats. While appearing to support the porch roof, the anchoring brackets are actually hollow PVC boxes, as are the tapered columns built around 4x4 structural posts.

ROOF: Synthetic slate has advantages over natural slate: It's lighter in weight, negating the need for extra structural support; it's easier to trim; and it costs about one-third less.

Generating the inlay's layout on a computer first (you could do the same on graph paper) sped up installation and helped cut the cost. Majestic Slate, \$7-\$9 per sq. ft., installed; ecostarllc.com

PAINT: Employing the design "rule of three," a clay-red accent color is repeated three times: on the roof tiles, on the lower edge of the slatted gable, and at the base of the columns. This highlights key features and keeps the eye traveling from the bottom of the house to the top. Paint: Wild Sage and Rookwood Dark Green (siding) and Rookwood Terra Cotta (accents), \$50 per gallon; sherwin-williams.com



WARM UP A COLD FACADE

What a difference a wash of lime-white can make. As impressive as this 1926 French Eclectic house was, the monotone monolith of red brick lacked detail, depth, and warmth. Reimagined by architect Jeremy Corkern, the Charlotte, North Carolina, home finally got the elegant patina it deserved. The front door's 9-foot-tall arched limestone frame is now a dramatic focal point, and the divided lights of the French doors echo the existing windows. Against the pale facade, the gray-slate hipped roof and the multiple-flue chimney pop, and shutters that looked dinky in harsh black now blend in, painted a warm white. Replacing a standard window with a custom bay inset with wavy restoration-style glass added major *oomph*.

IDEAS TO STEAL

PALE PALETTE: True limewash is a centuries-old type of matte paint made of slaked lime, water, and pigments; off-the-shelf products create a similar patina. The treatment here was done with diluted white latex paint, mixed with sand and applied in a couple of coats using a horsehair brush and a burlap bag for texture. An experienced painting contractor can help choose the best option for your house, depending on the color and condition of the existing brick. Porter's Paints' Lime Wash, \$102 per gallon; shpcompany.com. The other subtle colors at play here: warm

white Lambswool (trim and window shutters) and pale-green Artichoke (door shutters), \$62 per gallon; sherwin-williams.com.

DOOR AND BAY WINDOW:

Corkern designed an oversize arched-limestone entry-door casing with 7-foot French doors and a leaded-glass fanlight that balance the towering walls. The prominent molding around the custom bay window mirrors the visual weight of the front entry.

LANDSCAPING: The three shrubs on the right and lone shrub on the left are an example of asymmetrical balance. The simplest way to achieve it is with the 3-plus-1 arrangement shown here. Works well with painted pots too. ■

USE COLOR TO PLAY UP DETAILS

Hidden behind a stand of ailing century-old trees, this magnificent 1870s Italianate, in Berks County, Pennsylvania, had seen better days. Four previous owners had left their mark on the place—primarily in the forms of paint and neglect. Intricately carved moldings, paneled shutters, and fretwork had disappeared under a thick crust. Rampant climbing ivy had damaged large sections of brick. Working with local craftsmen, homeowner Brett Youmans repaired the crumbling porch posts, soffits, and 14 decorative corbels, all victims of water damage. Meticulously scraped and patched, the 12-foot-tall porch and 8-foot shutters are now painted in a handsome display of warm and cool grays that show off the home's unique architecture.

IDEAS TO STEAL

PAINT: After sampling more than two dozen colors, Brett chose a striking combination of Site White for the body and porch columns, and three shades of gray: from light Network Gray (shutter panels) to medium Web Gray (porch floor) to dark Cyberspace (trim). About \$50 per gallon; sherwin-williams.com

FRONT DOOR AND CEILING:

The restored double front doors pack a welcome punch of color with a custom shade of red. Pale blue, true to the period, coats the ceiling. Similar to shown: Moroccan Red (door) and Glacier Blue (ceiling), \$60 per gallon; benjaminmoore.com



BEFORE

ABOVE: Once cloaked in foliage (BEFORE), the 33-foot-long, 8-foot-deep porch is now an open invitation to gather.

LANDSCAPING: "Sometimes you add by subtracting," says Brett. Removing a stand of trees allowed in sufficient light for a new lawn. Shapely evergreen shrubs—a mix of tough, low-maintenance hollies and boxwoods—line the porch skirt. Red-twig dogwoods, whose crimson stems add winter interest, dot a new walkway to the left of the house leading to the driveway.

PHOTOS: (LEFT) GRIDLEY + GRAVES; (OPPOSITE PAGE) LAUREY W. GLENN



BEFORE

LEFT: Whitewashed brick, an arched door, and a bay window gave the once bland vintage house (BEFORE) the finesse it needed.