



Left: In addition to providing privacy and adding a burst of color, this purple gate leading to the backyard of Connie and Dennis Schweppe's home serves as a showcase for a decorative iron grille the couple found years ago in what Connie calls a "junk" shop. "We knew we'd find a use for it sometime," says the Portland, Oregon, gardener. Dennis, a skilled woodworker, made the gate with an opening to display the grille and also let visitors catch a glimpse of the garden. Plants growing in the fanciful container hanging below the grille help soften the look of the gate. "I change the plants in the planter from time to time," says Connie, "but tend to use succulents because they require little water."



Above: With its strong contrasts in color and material from the walls of gray stone, the eye-catching bamboo gate in this tropical garden in Kona, Hawaii, adds a touch of drama to an otherwise bland vignette.



Left: Rustic gates open to a gravel path in Carole and Jim McWilliams's garden near Atlanta, Georgia. Constructed by a local craftsman, the gates have an organic feel that matches the woodland ambiance of the property, which covers several acres and includes a creek.

glorious gates

BY MARY YEE

ANY GARDEN that is enclosed by a fence or some type of wall needs a gate for access. Gates are primarily made of wood or metal, and for pure functionality, you can find a number of options at the local home improvement center, but why not use this opportunity to also make a statement about you and your garden? Of all the elements in an average garden, a gate is perhaps the easiest to customize to make an instant impact. By simply choosing the right gate, you can turn your garden from drab to vibrant or ordinary to full of personality. On the following pages you'll see examples of how some gardeners across the country have done just that.

Mary Yee is managing editor and art director for The American Gardener.

Including an arbor over a gate allows it to do double duty. This cottage-style garden in the coastal town of Mendocino, California, features a classic white picket fence with a matching gate and arbor over which roses have been trained.

DOREEN WYNJA

TOP LEFT: JANET LOUGHREY; BOTTOM LEFT: DAVID J. ELLIS; RIGHT: DOREEN WYNJA



Portland, Oregon, garden designer Darcy Daniels needed a gate for this passageway between her back and front yards that was low-cost and easy to install, provided a sense of transparency, and also kept in her small dogs. A salvaged glass-paned window sash was the ideal solution. “I wanted to maintain an open look between the two spaces,” Daniels says. “Being able to see through the gate sends a very clear invitation to experience both gardens.” Additionally, the gate’s resemblance to a trellis contributes to the informal, floriferous feel of the garden.



Aside from style and color, another consideration for a gate is its suitability to a region’s climate. This turquoise gate to the back patio of Ann Butler’s house in Tucson, Arizona, contrasts with the pink adobe walls in a color combination popular in the Southwest. Butler, who wanted something low maintenance, chose wrought iron for the gate. “We have a lot of sun and heat in Tucson,” she says, “and, unlike wood, wrought iron stands up to both.” For privacy, a wire screen that has been spray-painted to match is riveted to the back of the gate. The gate’s sharp-angled lines complement the lines of the walls as well as the plantings of Mexican fence-post cactus (*Pachycereus marginatus*).

LEFT: JANET LOUGHREY. RIGHT: MARK TURNER.



In the Portland, Oregon, garden of Jose and JJ De Sousa, quirkiness rules. JJ, who is an interior and garden designer, loves color—especially orange—and she also has a taste for the eclectic, so this bright metal gate with a cut-out carrot motif is a perfect expression of her personality. The unique gate, which was custom-fabricated by a local artist, goes well with the many other orange objects in the De Sousa garden, including bowling balls, salvaged wall art, lounge chairs, and plant containers. “Orange is such a cheerful, happy color,” says JJ. “I’m surprised people don’t use it more.” As for a carrot gate, she knows it may not be for everyone. “The character of the garden usually gives you hints of what type of gate to use,” she says.



A simple, functional gate can be embellished to add personality. For her homestead in rural Bucks County, Pennsylvania, Nancy Ondra used a metal tubing gate from a farm supply store and painted it red to match the wood fencing. Then she introduced some whimsy by attaching a decorative metal trellis, also painted red, to the gate with wire. “It would be easy to attach other sorts of accessories, such as old garden tools, for a different look,” says Ondra. “The whole thing is relatively lightweight and is almost no maintenance: just occasional painting.” She adds, “Another advantage is, because the gate is metal, it will never sag. That’s a big problem I have with my wooden gates.”

TOP: JOSH MCCULLOUGH. BOTTOM: NANCY J. ONDRA