

# Downplaying the Garage

by Alan Freysinger

In a house with an attached garage, it can be a real challenge to prevent the garage doors from totally dominating the facade. Although this isn't a new problem, it seems to be getting worse: Three-car and even larger garages are increasingly common, while the individual stalls and the garage doors themselves are also getting bigger, thanks to the SUV craze. In many areas, 8- and 9-foot doors are becoming the norm.

How do you prevent such king-size doors from taking over? No single solution will work in every situation, but one of our recent projects provides a good illustration of three practical options, which can be adapted as site conditions dictate.

## Front-Facing Doors

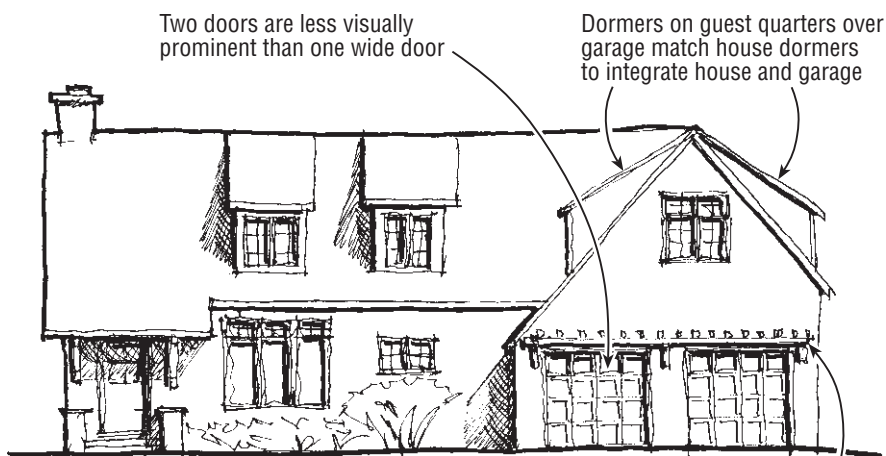
The simplest approach is to go ahead and put the doors facing front, while taking advantage of some simple tricks that make them seem less prominent (see Figure 1). Using a pair of garage doors rather than a single door, for example, helps scale down the apparent size of the opening. Doors with windows and multiple panels add interest to the elevation.

For this particular craftsman-style house, we also proposed adding a cantilevered trellis above the garage doors to make them appear to recede into the wall. Building actual recesses for the doors would have accomplished the same thing — older detached single-car garages in our area often have recessed doors for that very reason — but the trellis does so at less cost, and without eating up any floor space.

## Around Back

A second possibility we considered was to place the doors on the garage's rear eaves wall (Figure 2). If the space is available, this can be a very effective

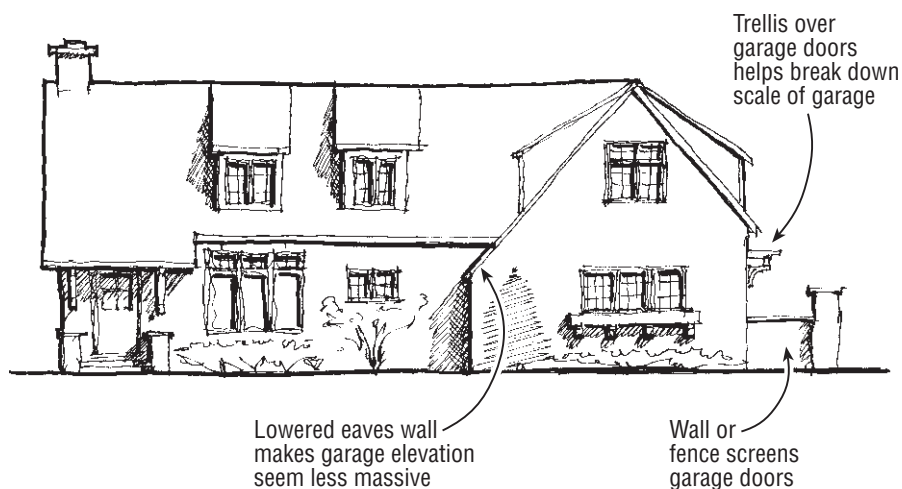
## The Head-On Approach



**Figure 1.** Good design can prevent the doors of a front-entry garage from overwhelming the elevation. Here, multipanel glazed doors, a craftsman-style trellis, and dormers above help integrate the garage with the rest of the house.

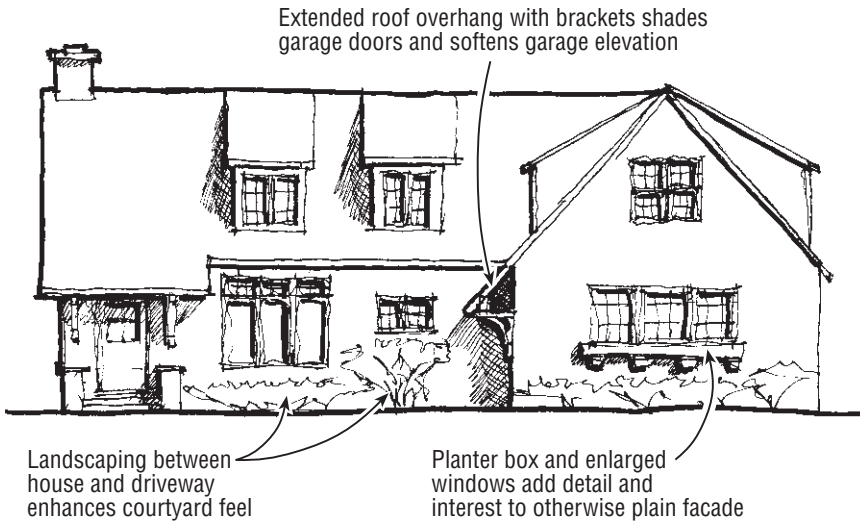
Cantilevered craftsman-style trellis creates shading over doors

## Side-Entry Option

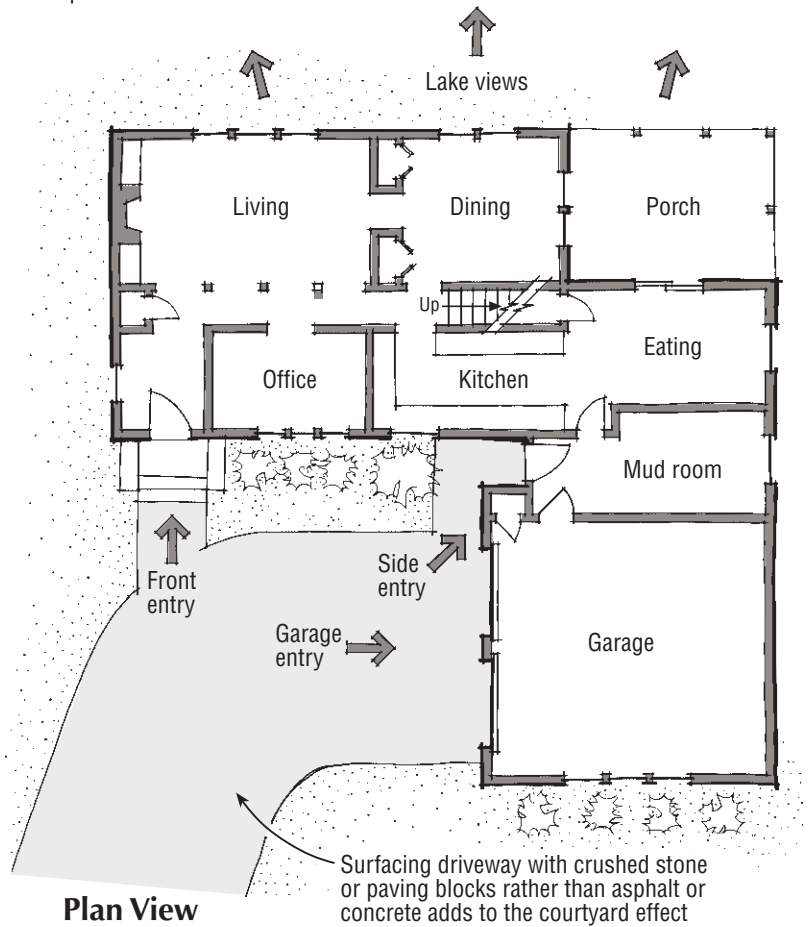


**Figure 2.** Orienting the garage so it's entered from the side makes the doors far less evident, especially if they are screened and softened by landscaping or a wall or fence.

# The Front Courtyard



**Figure 3.** The courtyard entry sacrifices some front-yard space but creates a landscaped entrance that is convenient for both homeowner and guests.



way to minimize the garage doors, especially if some additional camouflage, such as a wall or fence, is added to help screen the doors from the street. The disadvantage of this approach, of course, is that it tends to chew up a lot of property. At least 25 feet across the width of the lot are required for the driveway to make the right-angle turn into the garage, making it impractical on smaller lots.

## Entry Courtyard

As it happened, the spacious lakefront lot in question would have provided plenty of room for the side-entry garage. In the end, though, we ruled it out, because it would have meant cutting a

number of mature trees that were one of the site's nicest features.

Instead, we moved the garage doors to the other eaves wall, creating a pleasant "front courtyard" that framed an arrival area for the owners and their guests (Figure 3). A landscaped strip separates the house from the driveway and pro-

vides access to the side door to the left of the garage. Because it requires relatively little driveway space, the same approach could work well on a small lot with minimal setbacks.

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