

1. Thresholds

Arriving from a large cobbled yard at this Devon country house, the path narrows and you are drawn through espaliered pears and up stone steps before being delivered into the intimacy of the house courtyard.



2. Gate details

A beautifully hand-crafted oak gate with spindles copied from the staircase in the house. The sense of arrival is completed by the satisfying sound and action of opening and closing the gate to enter the garden.

3. Concealing and revealing

An entrance can be like a series of veils, gradually revealing what lies beyond. Here, a bank of wild flowers conceals the end of the path leading to an estate railing field gate, which is perfectly in keeping with its rural setting.

4. Indicating arrival

I use topiary as indicators in my own garden, and each piece has a different role to play. Beech indicates an entrance or arrival and this sentinel beech stands at the foot of the steps to the studio at my Monmouthshire home, Allt-y-bela.

5. The front door

There are many ways to signal the route to the front door. Along with using topiary indicators, I place beautiful hand-made pots filled with seasonal flowers.

WILLIAM COLLINSON

Entrances and driveways



When someone visits your garden, their first impression starts right at the entrance. Whatever the size of your home or garden, your choice of driveway, path or gate can help you build up an atmosphere and create a taster of what's to come

WORDS ARNE MAYNARD PHOTOGRAPHS BRITT WILLOUGHBY DYER

6. Approaching the house

In a rural setting, subtle markers are often all that is needed to sign an approach. At Allt-y-Bela, native beech clipped into tiers marks the entrance and grass has been seeded into the centre of the hoggin drive.



7. Entrance indicators

Anything man-made in a natural setting will draw attention to itself. The simplest of entrance indicators, a carved oak marker post, is set into clipped yew hedging at the entrance to an Oxfordshire garden.



8. Entrance to a drive

Outer gates need not be solid. These oak gates are transparent, allowing some views into the property. This allows the garden to sit comfortably in its village setting without shutting out the world.



9. Contrasting surfaces

In this garden the driveway is kept clean and crisp to give it an appropriate formality. This contrasts with a band of long grass and wild flowers flanking the driveway.



IMAGES 7&8 BY NICK HAND



JASON INGRAM

10. Entrance courtyard

The area directly in front of this house has been reclaimed from parking and made into a courtyard garden. The clipped yew hedge at the end of the curve hides the cars and the chipping surface unites the drive, parking and garden areas.

Suppliers & stockists

For oak gates and architectural carpentry
Capps and Capps,
The Sawmill, Sarnesfield,
Herefordshire HR4 8RH.
Tel 01544 318877,
www.cappsandcapps.com

For limestone chippings and other crushed stone
A local quarry will have the best match for your soil and home. Make sure the mix contains fines so it will tamp down to form a firm surface. Suttles quarries stock different stone and will deliver nationwide. Head office is at Suttle Stone Quarries, Swanworth Quarry, Worth Matravers, Swanage, Dorset BH19 3LE. Tel 01929 439444, www.suttles.co.uk

For bricks and cobbles:
Solopark, Station Road, near Pampisford, Cambridgeshire CB22 3HB. Tel 01223 834663, email www.solopark.co.uk

When designing the entrance to a property, including drives, gateways and parking areas, I use 'invisible indicators' to manipulate the way people travel through the garden. This can be done through the hard landscaping surfaces or simply the architecture of plants.

Driveways offer an opportunity to create the all-important sense of arrival and I like to build up the atmosphere gradually. To get to my own garden, you travel down a lush country lane with high banks on either side of native hedgerows full of wildflowers in spring. On the final approach to the house there was originally a five-barred

gate across the lane, which felt completely out of place in this deep country setting. We removed it, but I still needed something to indicate which way to go, so we have a native beech clipped in tiers, which acts as a sentinel at the entrance.

Choosing the right materials is important. Because I wanted the drive to feel like a field track, we used a hoggin surface (a compacted mix of crushed stone, sand and clay) and then sowed grass seed into the space between the wheel tracks to give a soft, country feel. For a more formal effect, I use self-binding stone chippings from the local area: golden limestone chippings in the Cotswolds, crushed granite in Cornwall.

This gives a stable surface which not only looks better but is easier to negotiate than loose gravel. For a smaller, more intimate entrance I might use a textural surface of brick or cobbles.

These details contribute to the ceremony of arrival, and the same applies to gateways. The entrance to a drive could be through a plain wooden gate or just a pair of oak posts. Closer to the house, a pedestrian gate might be given some ornamentation, a carved detail, relating perhaps to the interior of the house.

The issue of how to deal with parking is a major one. All too often, cars are parked in front of the house. Wherever we have enough space,

though, we build a garden in front of the house. In large gardens, we move parking away from the house and screen it with hedging or pleached trees.

Maintaining a unity of surface is important. Again, we use limestone chippings because they give a courtyard feel. This surface is suitable for both planting and parking. In small spaces, where there are no other parking options, it is still possible to make the space in front of the house feel like a garden, by planting low plants in the chipping surface around the parking area. Plants such as lavender or lady's mantle (*Alchemilla mollis*) will thrive in the free-draining conditions. □

NEXT MONTH Hedges