

# Porch Life

*The relaxed  
rhythm of  
coastal living  
begins at the  
entrance of a  
home.*

By TANYA A. YACINA





“A well-curated front porch breathes life into a home. If it is stale, unfriendly or overlooked, you have missed an opportunity of expressing your design aspect and to set tone of your home”

—CHRIS FENMORE

Historically, front porches represented a social space populated with rocking chairs, fresh lemonade and waves to the neighbors. Today’s modern designs often place an emphasis on the interior space and the functionality of a home’s front porch can often be overlooked. However, a well-appointed front porch can be more than a home’s pretty face by offering lifestyle value, functionality and allure.

Chris Fenmore, founder and principal designer at Garden Studio Design ([gardenstudiodesign.com](http://gardenstudiodesign.com)), says a front porch is the crystallization of the entire architecture of a home.

“The front porch is the first moment you start to feel welcomed into someone’s home. It sets the stage, it creates the mood, it identifies what the occupant is projecting to the world,” she says. “A well-curated front porch breathes life into a home. If it is stale, unfriendly or overlooked, you have missed an opportunity of expressing your design aspect and to set tone of your home.”

Robin Weller, owner of and designer at Robin Weller Design ([robinwellerdesign.com](http://robinwellerdesign.com)), says a front porch should represent rest while offering an inviting and welcoming element to the home.

“It’s a peaceful space to take a moment out of your busy day to observe your surroundings. I love front porches – perfect place for your morning coffee and evening glass of wine,” Weller says. “It really softens



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your front elevation. It creates that feeling of 'home' to your house. It is also a wonderful way to create more outdoor living space, which we all love and crave in California."

### Blending Style and Welcome

When designing the aesthetic of a front porch, Weller recommends finding furniture that's comfortable, durable and low maintenance. And she says to always buy the furniture covers.

"I always use outdoor fabrics. I love Perennials [fabrics] – it just makes life a lot easier to have water and weather resistant fabrics in an outdoor area. I like to keep it simple using mainly solids and accenting with decorative pillows," she explains. "Pillows are easy to change. A solid base color for all your seat cushions gives you continuity and makes your space feel bigger."

For the outdoor space, Fenmore says not to skimp on the quality of a front porch light, as it's a way to show off the design of the front of the home, as well as keep the safety of the porch in mind. She says to employ a dimmer switch, if possible, to damper any of the light's brightness in the small space.

Weller is a fan of adding a swing to a front porch, and says it not only adds a playful element, but the motion of the swing is also calming. She says adding a firepit to the area is a nice touch, provided it doesn't overcrowd the area.

"[Add] a bench or two interesting chairs if there is room," Fenmore says. "A bench is nice to take off dirty shoes or leave a package, and two chairs are inviting and create a friendly vignette."

When curating a personalized front porch space, Fenmore encourages the use of natural pots, creative address numbers, good door hardware and a fabricated metal mailbox to add charm.

"Planters always soften the space. Bringing some green onto your porch introduces a sense of tranquility. A water feature is nice as well," says Weller. "Creating a space of relaxation is key to a happy, inviting porch."

Weller recommends pulling the colors from inside the home to transition to the outside, explaining that keeping the color palette the same is a way to transition from one space to another.

### Start to Finish Styling Tips

Fenmore says when home's front area is



charming, it becomes a place to land to enjoy a cup of coffee in the morning or a glass of wine in the evening.

"Splurge on the hardscape material at the door. This is the place to have a detail like a brick pattern or a stone that reflects the style of the home," she says. "If possible, have a porch big enough that four to six people can stand together comfortably – if there is space for seating, it is fun to have at least seating for two and, if possible, four."

Weller cautions against overcrowding a front porch's space and says to keep it simple and functional so it's easy for you and your guests to get around.

"Make it accessible, make it comfortable, make it inviting," she says.

Fenmore says to keep in mind that color choices are particular to each home and accent colors are different for different



people. Although, she does tend to avoid bright colors in this type of space because they can make the area look cliché.

“If you are going to go with lighter colors, make sure you can easily wash your cushions and they are made of a really good quality outdoor fabric,” Weller warns.

“Pots are always nice – these don’t have to be complicated. Just a nice green shrub can get the job done,” says Fenmore. “Don’t overdo it. If the plants are too large, it can feel like a jungle. Conversely, pots that are too small look sad and cheap.”

She also suggests planting an anchor tree near the porch.

“It is so charming to sit under or near a tree,” she explains. “With good up lighting, the tree becomes another element that looks inviting and curated.”

“I love fountains, but they are a lot of maintenance. So, if you are not ready for that kind of time commitment, I’d avoid investing in one,” Fenmore advises. “It will just look sad and dirty if it is not maintained or broken. Firepits are great, but you will have to check and make sure your HOA or city will allow this.”

Weller advises taking into consideration a front porch’s exposure to the surrounding neighbors and encourages creating a sense of privacy in the design. **NBM**



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