

The Front Porch

By Julie Silva

Front porches are the entryway to our lives. It is the point where we greet family and friends and invite them into our house. Front porches are part of our history. They were a necessity in the summer time. Lack of air conditioning drove people out of doors in the evenings. Front porches were home to comfortable chairs, maybe rockers, and glasses of sweet tea. The neighborhood news came from people strolling by. The front porch was truly an extension of the house. It was the end of the day salvation, time to relax, and enjoy the family. The porch was an invitation to stop, visit, and enjoy your place in the town.

Front porches may be another way to celebrate our lives. Just as we decorate for Christmas, our front porch may be utilized year round to celebrate the moments of our lives. By using plants for color and items for decoration your front porch will become an extension of your home. Here are some examples.

Decorate for kids starting a new school, returning to school, or celebrating home coming. Use flowers with school colors. Set out used books. Maybe an old chair with a lunch box or a school bag. Add the school mascot. School colors could be for the whole neighborhood since everyone goes back to school at the same time and might attend the same school. Using color annuals for upcoming events will need pre-planning. If you are going to use pansies in the fall for school colors the time to plant is now. Use a good potting soil in your pots so there are nutrients and water holding abilities. Old potting soil may lack both. Plant your pansies close to create blocks of colors.

Grab a cause and decorate to celebrate it. Be a monarch butterfly waystation. Plant butterfly-friendly plants, give the butterflies a stopping point for drinks and food, and install a Waystation sign. Let your neighbors know what you are doing and invite them to join in or watch your new attractions. You could do the very same thing for hummingbirds. Monarchs and hummingbirds both enjoy many perennials so those plants become a permanent part of your landscape. Plants like butterfly bush, bee balm, coneflower, salvias, sages, and zinnias. Invite nature to your front porch.

If you are an antique or repurposed items lover, the front porch is your oyster. Large colored vases filled with solar lights are eye catching. Large silver plate trays may be used like a wreath, hung from a handle with added greenery and seasonal décor. A chair and metal milk can for an end table, surrounded with colored ceramic pots filled with flowers will be pleasing to anyone walking by. Colored glassware is inexpensive and easy to stage. Fill your glassware with birdseed, pots of flowers, pine cones, or colorful plastic or glass balls. Antique chairs make great plant stands.

How about celebrating the military for public service? Let's say you love your front porch as it is. What about a neighbor that served in the military? Surprise them with a container filled with red, white, and blue flowers or a neat container filled with oyster shells and holding a small American flag on a small stick upright. As we see now with tributes honoring law enforcement, many people are using blue bows and ribbons. Even blue porch lights that are being left on

throughout the night will have officers on patrol notice, especially if your neighbors join in. When you are purchasing colored ceramic pots remember upcoming themes. Blue pots filled with white pansies will be beautiful.

Your front porch is what beckons you in. Your home should reach for your heart and hold you close every time you pull into the driveway.

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