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# OLD HOUSE

## JOURNAL

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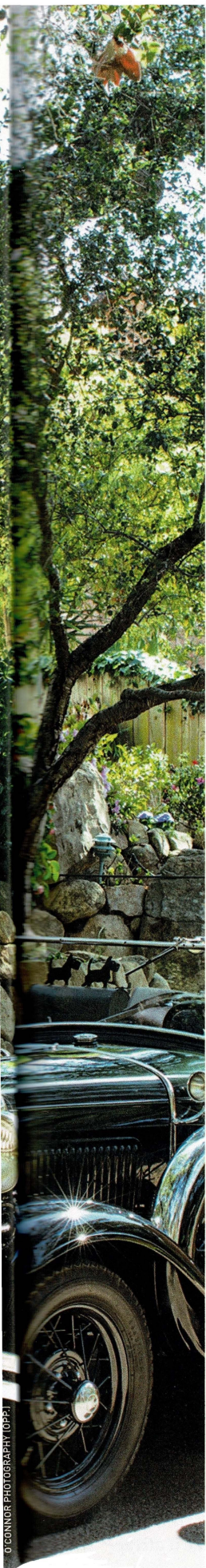




### **LOCATION**

Peculiarities of site may suggest a material, as when a fieldstone wall morphs into a garage. A pronounced slope can allow the garage to tuck under the house or into a berm.





**LEFT** This picturesque old garage appears as a garden structure between the street and the 1925 French Norman-style house. **RIGHT** A new outbuilding designed by Patrick Ahearn revives the carriage house; it was built to protect a trio of collectible automobiles and also serves as outdoor entertainment space.



# Garages & outbuildings

**A well-designed garage does more than stable automobiles.** It may by its placement create a private courtyard. It can block noise or a neighbor, or add balance if it's part of the house. Today's garages are also storage units and potting sheds; they may accommodate a home office or guest suite. Because a garage is new construction requiring everything from permits to utilities, it's worth taking time to design one that works now and for the future—say, when electric-vehicle charging stations are a common requirement. **BY PATRICIA POORE**





For a vintage Colonial Revival house, architect John B. Murray designed a detached garage that reads as a converted barn. The swing-out doors and garage floor are raised several inches off the ground for clearance.

## CARRIAGE HOUSE or barn lookalike

If the automobile garage itself has little precedent as a fully detailed, multi-function space, that's not true of outbuildings in general. **Surviving barns, offering lots of room** and storage capacity, were remade by several generations to become vacation homes, car barns with workshops, home offices, and so on. **Victorian-era houses** may have had a carriage house later converted to garage space. "Converted barn" and "carriage house" are common scenarios used by designers for adding a garage to a 19th-century house. **Bungalows often had a garage** from the beginning; catalogs and plan books from as early as 1909 include garages that mimic the style of the new homes they accompany. **Sometimes a rather plain, hip- or gable-roofed garage** is most suitable.

**T**he garage, designed specifically for an automobile, was at first a utilitarian building separate from the house. By the 1920s garages were increasingly tied to the house by a loggia, pergola, or breezeway. A low wall between house and garage formed a courtyard (or, at least, a laundry yard). The "walled compound" look was particularly popular for English and French Revival houses. Garages for 20th-century Colonial Revival houses, like those designed by Royal Barry Wills, emulated the connected buildings of New England farmhouses. After fear of fire subsided, garages were attached, although many codes continued to require fire walls. On Dutch Colonials, a garage as one wing balanced a porch-on-slab, sleeping porch, or sunporch on the other side.

Soon garages were tucked under the house or hidden in irregular massing, as in **Tudor homes**. But not until the postwar split-level era did double doors boldly appear on the primary façade.

Fancy garages are not new; they were built all along for the wealthy, often with a mechanic's shop and chauffeur's quarters. In the 1920s and certainly the '30s, suburban owners could choose from garage designs that matched the house: Mediterranean, gambrel, English cottage. Craftsman-influenced styles were easy to adapt to garages. "Spanish" garages had tiled roofs. Garages have always had windows for ventilation and light, often mimicking those of the house.

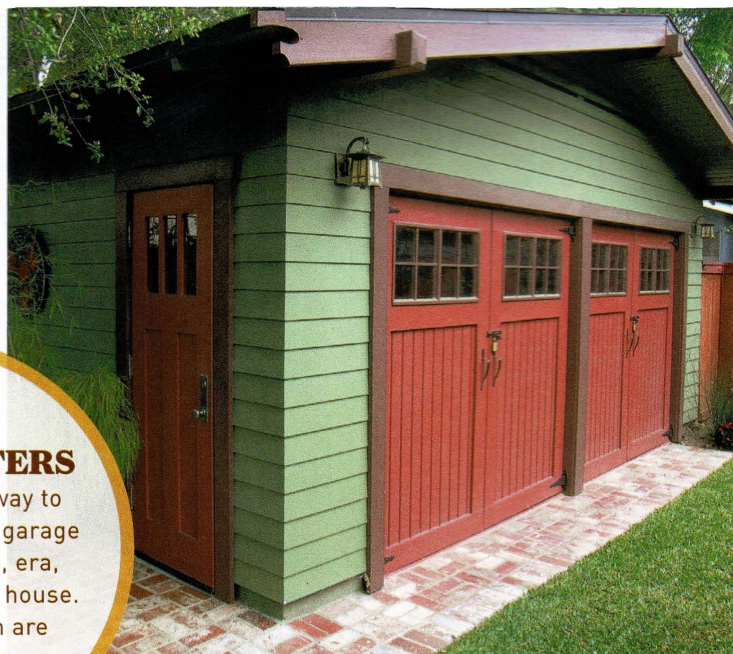
If you have an old garage that's usable, even if it doesn't match the house, consider paint color and trellising to make it attrac-



## STYLE MATTERS

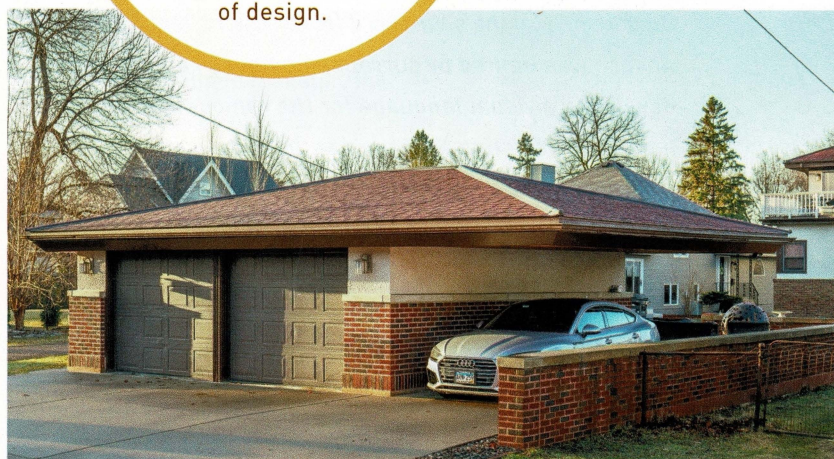
The most obvious way to design a compatible garage is to echo the style, era, and materials of the house.

Roofline and pitch are critical aspects of design.



**LEFT** A garage by Nott & Associates is essentially a box with a gabled roof. Decorative rafter cuts, door details, and colors are in keeping with the Pasadena bungalow neighborhood.

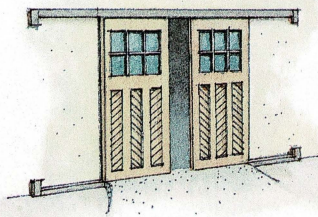
**BOTTOM** A hyphen connects the house to a discreet garage that uses the sloped site and keeps doors off the primary facade. The barn-style doors are by Garaga.



**ABOVE** Lessons from a garage designed by David Heide Design Studio: Form and materials match the house. The cantilevered roof adds to the Prairie horizontality while sheltering a useful carport. Garage doors face the alley (left). From the house, though, the building is designed to look like a garden pavilion (right), complete with ribbon windows and a niche for a Wright-designed Sprite With Scepter ([shopwright.org](http://shopwright.org)).



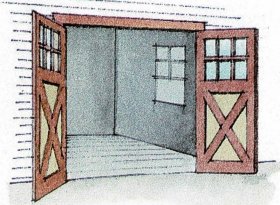




## DOOR DESIGN OPTIONS

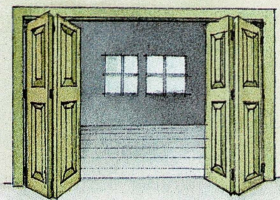
### < SLIDING (1910–1929)

A sliding door with diagonally laid match-board panels looks and works like a barn door.



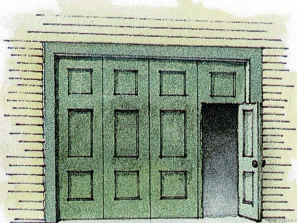
### < SWINGING (1910–1940)

The real thing, cross braced. Overhead door manufacturers emulate this look without the inherent problems.



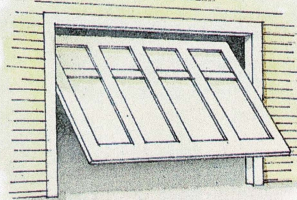
### < FOLDING (1915–1929)

Bifold or accordion doors date to the Teens and Twenties. Doors slid on tracks; now they disappear overhead.



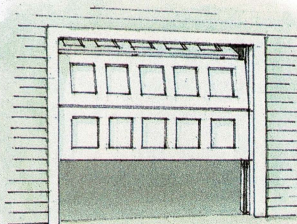
### < WITH WICKET DOOR (1915–1929)

That person-sized door hinged into the garage door was typically called a wicket. It's still a good idea.



### < TILTING (1935–1949)

A mid-century variant of the overhead door; today, rolling overhead doors can be made to look like these paneled ones.



### < SECTIONAL OVERHEAD (1920–present)

The only really practical option for constant use, the sectional overhead or “roll-up” door is standard.



## Separate & Attached

*Faced with an old house in Edgartown's Village Historic District on Martha's Vineyard (Mass.), architect Patrick Ahearn was limited by surrounding houses and ocean. He developed a visual language for the remodeled Federal house. The existing addition's setback (apparent in the Before picture) diminishes the impact of the box, now converted to a garage, and shingle siding further sepa-*



*rates its identity from the clapboarded house. A nice amenity, the roof deck with a new balustrade helps with proportion and ties into the vocabulary.*



**LEFT** Cambek built this custom carriage-house door with Tudor styling, even including a wicket, or person-size walk-through door, that allows discreet entry. Closed, the wicket becomes part of the overhead operation.



**A LOOK INSIDE** This view of the garage and summer-house, designed by David Heide Design Studio to complement the 1922 Prairie School house in St. Paul, shows how the three buildings form a private courtyard protected from the street. Inside, adequate lighting and planned storage units make the garage space efficient and usable. Home to a practical SUV as well as a beloved antique roadster, the space even includes auto-themed curtains at the windows.



tive. Garage doors often are painted to match the trim color of the house—or even left white from the factory! Painting an ugly or too-big door the house's body color instead will disguise it. If the doors are attractive, do paint them in the trim color, perhaps with panels reversed to body color or a shade of the trim color.

If the garage is to be all-new, the first decision is whether it will be a separate building, semi-attached, or part of the house. If fitting in matters to you, walk or bicycle around town, peering down alleys and side streets. Note materials, old garages' relation to their lots and houses, roof types, door configurations, and details. Garages that mimicked the style of the house were not as common as utilitarian structures, but they are the ones that have tended to survive the decades.

An architect may see how to integrate car parking in a modest rear extension or underneath—in space excavated from the basement or patio. A designer understands that the garage should be subservient to the main house. The last resort is a large garage

attached in front, but good design can rescue even that scenario with right proportions and roof, a setback, or divided bays.

Doors are the most important key to compatibility. Most modern garage doors, no matter how traditional the style, have horizontal breaks to allow them to retract overhead. It almost always looks better to separate each car bay, rather than use a door two cars wide. Consider specifying raised panels for a Colonial Revival; long, narrow panels for Craftsman or English Revival architecture. Many period garages had cross-bracing, similar to barn doors. Tongue-and-groove beadboard or matchboard was popular for door panels, too, used vertically or on the diagonal. Don't overdo it: a simple hipped-roof garage doesn't need arched, multi-light, highly varnished mahogany doors.

In the design phase, plan for utilities and the interior—and any future use, such as a workshop or guestroom. Choose a durable floor finish that can be cleaned. Be sure your electrical service can someday handle that charging station.