

Seasonal



STATEMENTS

Two Chatham-based garden designers transform front entries into festive displays that celebrate the spirit of the season.

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AS THE DAYS GROW SHORTER

and that first chill settles in, hydrangea blooms begin to take on earthy tones, while the seagrass wears its golden fall hue. For many of us, it's the perfect moment to celebrate the changing season by adorning our front doors, porches or steps—a welcoming gesture for visitors and a comforting reminder of what we love about returning home.

At a time when some local businesses are starting to catch their breath, it's an all-out sprint to the finish line for local professional fine gardeners, who work tirelessly to ensure their clients' front entries set the perfect tone for the season.

BEDWORKS DESIGN

When we catch up with Shayne Sibley, founder and co-owner, with her husband, John, of Bedworks Design, she is putting the finishing touches on an azure-hued container arrangement on the front steps of a historic waterfront home. Her French Bulldog, Rosie Pockets, waits nearby. Sibley's masterful trick for this entry décor is to blend the seasons into a stylish look that is understated yet bold. It's a late summer-into-fall vibe with just the right pop of whimsy and color.

"There is a period of time from late summer through mid-fall where time seems to stand still in the garden," says Sibley. "The garden needs no tending then—it needs to be left alone to slowly pass." It's her favorite time of year, especially on the Cape. She evokes that feeling in her early fall pots—wispy, soft and full of texture—and aims to reflect the ease of the transition in all her seasonal décor.

This transitional approach results in a dazzling feast for the eyes: Shades of summery blues in the vessels are expertly tied into the bright fall colors, with



Shayne Sibley of Bedworks Design layers her creations in containers of varying heights, achieving just the right balance of style and seasonality. The bluestone stoop comes alive with agave, false holly, rosemary, yellow zinnia, lemongrass, petunias, calibrachoa, American bittersweet, red diascia and pansies.



The palette for this beachfront home is deliberately light and breezy, with blue-hued vessels filled with soft-colored plants such as pink aster, yellow nemesia, asparagus fern, lemongrass, calibrachoa, purple and white pansies, ornamental kale, white bacopa and mums.

Right: The understated, low-profile trough-style container is planted with gaultheria winter splash wintergreen, osteospermum (African daisy), isolepis (fiber-optic grass), ipomoea vine sweet caroline raven, rudbeckia Indian summer, ornamental pepper salsa yellow, ornamental kale, and red and orange pansies.





Sibley makes a joyous statement starring spruce topiaries surrounded by helleborus frost kiss, American cranberry, gaultheria winter splash wintergreen and leucothoe burning love. The wreath features pomegranate, pine cones, winterberry sprigs and red twig dogwood. Her signature sleigh bells complete the look of a hearty Christmas welcome.

deep-pink mums connecting the two palettes. Neutral gourds round out the look to create an embrace of color and joy for those approaching the home's marine-blue front door.

From fall designs to holiday magic

For Sibley, a 24-year veteran of the art of fine gardening and landscape creation, it's a year-round job to hand-raise plants that she knows she will need in the fall containers. They are indeed the backbone of her creations.

"Often we use plants from the garden that continue to look beautiful into late fall, such as hellebores, camellia, magnolia, various juniper and holly cultivars, grasses, heaths and heathers, and late-blooming perennials and annuals," says Sibley.

The week after Thanksgiving is the time when the holiday front door and porch madness kicks back in

for its second wave. Sibley's clients are shifting their preparations into high gear with the arrival of family for the holidays. This fine gardener advises starting early and picking a theme that connects the wreath, the garland, the containers—and sometimes the entire porch.

"What feeling are you trying to evoke? Simple and sweet, or big curb appeal?" asks Sibley. She encourages using personal, nostalgic touches and native materials like blue mussel shells or cranberries strung on fishing line. "This season, we're designing for texture and color rather than just flowers," she says. "It has to feel authentic."

Sleigh bells capture spirit of season

A recent favorite theme for Bedworks Design holiday décor was sleigh bells. Each of their clients' front doors received a locally handmade leather sleigh-bell strap as a centerpiece of the creation.



Great Pyrenees Malcolm poses between dreamy blue ceramic containers brimming with curly willow, bracken's brown magnolia, white birch and western red cedar. Handmade boxwood roping and a kissing ball finish it off in glorious style.



Heather Flueckiger's barn door display features handmade cedar and balsam garlands lit with soft white lights and handmade balsam wreaths adorned with pine cones, starfish and magnolia leaves. A woven basket anchors the look with juniper, cedar and balsam boughs, birch branches, gold pine cones and red winterberry branches, accented by colorful Adirondack chairs from Agway of Cape Cod in Chatham.

"We love what sleigh bells represent," shares Sibley, adding that in the early and dark New England winter nights, sleigh bells were as essential as candles to alert passersby of your approach. They were also offered as a gift in return for an act of kindness if someone assisted you in your travels.

"We think it's all very representative of the spirit of the holiday season here."

Barn doors take center stage

More and more, homeowners aren't just decorating their doors but are also taking the opportunity to highlight the spirit of the season on other architectural elements of their homes, like a pair of barn doors close to the road that sit quietly the rest of the year waiting for their moment to shine. Heather Flueckiger was tasked with turning an unassuming pair of barn doors into an eye-catching scene brimming with Christmas spirit.

The barn doors were a fun design challenge, says Flueckiger, who experimented with several ideas before landing on the final look. She framed the doorway with cedar, fir and pine, then tucked lights underneath to create a warm, cozy effect with extra impact. Her advice: Choose the right lighting, consider framing and scale, and use colors and textures that complement your space.

While we all want that "home for the holidays" look, you don't have to be home for the holidays to spread a little joy in your neighborhood. Sibley has clients who are not able to spend Christmas in Chatham but go to great lengths to ensure that their front door is in full holiday glory—because they know it makes their neighbors happy to see a dose of Christmas cheer as they pass by.

"The feeling of 'home' runs deep for many of our clients," says Sibley. "Whether they are there or not, decorating their home for the neighbors is a way of saying they care." ▲