

CHARLOTTE URBAN

HOME

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CELEBRATING INSPIRATIONAL DESIGN AND PERSONAL STYLE





American Architectural Style

by Nancy Atkinson

The elements of classic architecture give our homes curb appeal and good bones. But the details that distinguish a Cape Cod vary greatly from those that create a Craftsman. Which style feels like home to you? From the colonial era to modern contemporary, we've defined the key characteristics of 14 popular house designs to help you find a home you love.



NEOCLASSICAL

ORIGIN: The style flourished in the early part of the 20th century, used widely in institutional settings like universities and government, but in residential buildings as well, relating back to the classic architecture of ancient Greece and Rome.

AESTHETICS: Look for symmetry, tall Doric columns, elaborate doorways and evenly spaced windows, along with a colonnaded façade, pedimented front porch and formal proportions.

WHY IT'S COOL: It's immediately recognizable, the most famous being Thomas Jefferson's Virginia home Monticello, which means a timeless architectural style.



VICTORIAN

ORIGIN: We often associate the elaborate trim and bright colors of a home resembling a dollhouse with this style. But Victorian architecture encompasses many well-known styles that emerged during the reign of Queen Victoria. Gothic revival, Italianate, Second Empire and Queen Anne styles all evolve from the Victorian idea that architecture should be beautiful rather than practical.

AESTHETICS: Look for homes that are two to three stories featuring decorative trim, textured wall surfaces, a steep multi-faceted roof, towers, vibrant colors and a large wraparound porch.

WHY IT'S COOL: The combination of architectural styles allows designers to mix the styles as they see fit, which means there are few Victorian homes that look the same.



MID CENTURY MODERN

ORIGIN: Forward-thinking for its time, this style first began in 1945, when World War II brought new materials, including steel and plywood, to the forefront of architecture. Mid-Century Modern homes flourished into the 1980s.

AESTHETICS: This style is known for its flat planes, large glass windows and open space with a focus on simplistic design and seamless integration with nature. Many Mid-century houses also utilized changes in elevation with small steps going up and down between rooms creating split-level spaces and partial walls or cabinets of varying heights to create different depths in the space.

WHY IT'S COOL: This style has a great integration with nature. Rooms have multiple outdoor views, or multiple access points, encouraging an appreciation of healthy living.



CAPE COD

ORIGIN: Inspired by Britain's thatched cottages, this style was born in the 1600s and early 1700s.

AESTHETICS: Look for the symmetry of windows flanking the front door, dormer windows on the second level and cedar shingles to find a true Cape Cod.

WHY IT'S COOL: It is most popular in New England, where the home's steeply pitched roof and larger chimneys make them perfect for withstanding cold Northeastern winters.



COLONIAL

ORIGIN: Originating in the 1600s, Colonial architecture came to America around 1876 and has many variations, due to the diversity of early American settlers. Colonial styles include Dutch, Georgian and Federal.

AESTHETICS: The Dutch Colonial is easily recognized by its broad gambrel look, which gives it a barn house look. Georgian is the most common type of Colonial home and features strict symmetry, five windows across and flattened columns. The Federal Colonial is modeled after Roman classicism with decorative embellishments, tall columns, grand curved steps, fan shaped window topping the door with long windows placed symmetrically on either side of the door.

WHY IT'S COOL: All three styles are known for their symmetry, characterized by evenly spaced shuttered windows, proportioned dormers, columns and chimneys to complement the formal style.



COTTAGE

ORIGIN: This style takes its name from the Cotters of the Middle Ages, the European peasant farmers whose English countryside homes inspired its charm. Popular in America during the 1920s and 30s, cottage-style refers to homes that exude a warm, storybook character.

AESTHETICS: These homes are made from brick, stone or stucco siding and feature curved entryways, steep roof pitches and cross gables, arched doors and casement windows.

WHY IT'S COOL: Cottages have high curb appeal with brighter exterior colors and flowers adorning the entryway.



TUDOR

ORIGIN: When referring to the architectural style in the U.S., the term refers not to typical buildings of Tudor England, but instead to a style popularized in the United States during the end of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. The style is based loosely on a variety of elements from medieval English architecture, including humble cottages and stately manors.

AESTHETICS: This style includes steeply pitched, multi-gabled rooflines, embellished entries, mixed siding materials, casement windows, elaborate chimneys and decorative half-timber framing.

WHY IT'S COOL: With its Hansel and Gretel-esque details and countryside charm, there's no more romantic style.



MEDITERRANEAN

ORIGIN: Extremely popular in the United States from 1918 to 1940, Mediterranean style was modeled after the hacienda design, combining influences from Spain, Italy, Portugal and other countries in the Mediterranean region.

AESTHETICS: Red-tiled roofs and stucco finishes define this style, with today's versions combining courtyards, porticos, balconies, interior arches and ornamental details such as heavy wooden doors and multicolored tiles.

WHY IT'S COOL: The roof tiles, heavier than regular shingles, can last for a century or more, and are usually low-maintenance and the flooring is often made of terra-cotta tiles, keeping feet cool on a hot day.



FARMHOUSE

ORIGIN: True farmhouse homes were built on agricultural land by early colonial families of the 1700s. Architects were only for the wealthy, so these owners built their homes themselves out of mud, stone or logs modeled after popular styles of the day. The result was unpretentious, functional and straightforward.

AESTHETICS: Common elements are functional porches, formal spaces in the front of the home informal spaces in the back, a simple but inviting exterior and a rural or country setting.

WHY IT'S COOL: For families hoping to buy that special vacation retreat in the country, finally have enough space to grow that garden, or just move away from the city or suburbs, the informality of a farmhouse may be the perfect fit.



CRAFTSMAN

ORIGIN: Inspired by the Arts and Crafts Movement, which began in England in the late 19th century, this style was most popular in America in the early 1900s to 1930s.

AESTHETICS: Typical exterior features include low-pitched roofs with wide eave overhangs and wide front porches framed by tapered square columns.

WHY IT'S COOL: Craftsman-style homes emphasize the use of natural materials like wood, stone and brick and interior woodwork that includes built-in furniture and shelving, large fireplaces and exposed beams.



PRAIRIE

ORIGIN: Another style influenced by the Arts and Crafts Movement, the low-slung Prairie home was developed in the Midwest by architectural trailblazer Frank Lloyd Wright. Seeking an alternative to the excesses of the Victorian era and the machine-based lifestyle of the Industrial Age, Wright based his design on the idea that a home should serve all practical needs without being overly showy.

AESTHETICS: Open floor plans, built-in furniture and use of simple materials define Prairie style, which also features long flat roofs, rows of windows, horizontal lines and window mullions with geometric patterns based on plants like wheat.

WHY IT'S COOL: Having a true Frank Lloyd Wright home means that it's a one-of-a-kind, with just a few coming onto the market each year and only a few hundred designed around the country.



FRENCH PROVINCIAL

ORIGIN: The provincial style was inspired by rural manors in the French countryside. American soldiers serving in Europe during World War I admired the homes and made them popular in postwar America.

AESTHETICS: Steeply pitched hip roofs without front facing gables, tall second-story windows, brick, stucco and stone exteriors and porches with substantial balustrades define this style.

WHY IT'S COOL: With its decorative appeal and romantic touches, English estate style, American farmhouse and even transitional decorating styles can all work very well in a French provincial home.

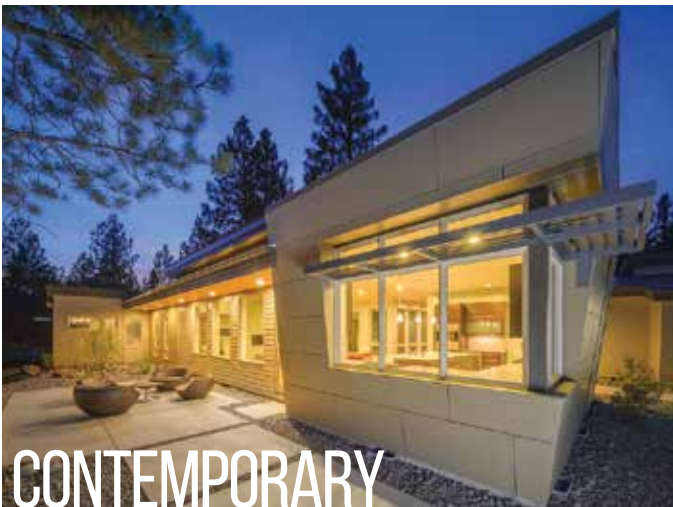


GREEK REVIVAL

ORIGIN: This international design first appeared in America during the 1820s and flourished during the 1830s and 40s. At the time, America was looking to ancient Greece for inspiration. Not just in its architecture, but in its philosophy, the arts and science as well.

AESTHETICS: Symmetrical in shape and featuring tall columns and pediments, painted plaster exteriors, horizontal transoms, bold moldings and embellishments, Greek Revival homes are commonly found on large estates and historic plantations.

WHY IT'S COOL: Dramatic and grand in scale, these homes are built for entertaining.



CONTEMPORARY

ORIGIN: The term contemporary refers to the architecture of the 1950s to 1970s, but is widely used to describe homes that focus on simple forms and geometric lines.

AESTHETICS: This style features open floor plans, lack of ornamentation, a dynamic mix of contrasting materials and textures, exposed roof beams and flat or low-pitched roofs define this style.

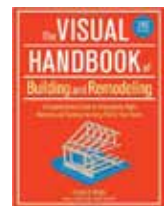
WHY IT'S COOL: A true contemporary will also emphasize energy efficiency, sustainable materials, lots of natural light and the use of recycled non-toxic materials.

Light Reading

A few of our favorite books on architecture and design.



A Field Guide to American Houses
by Virginia Savage McAlester



The Visual Handbook of Building and Remodeling
by Charlie Wing



Get Your House Right
by Marianne Cusato
& Ben Pentreath with Richard Sammons & Leon Krier



What Your Contractor Can't Tell You
by Amy Johnston