

# WHAT'S NEW IN Exterior Doors

**U**ntil just a few years ago, choosing an entry door was pretty simple: mid- and lower-priced homes got steel doors, while high-end homes got wood. Both steel

by Jon Vara

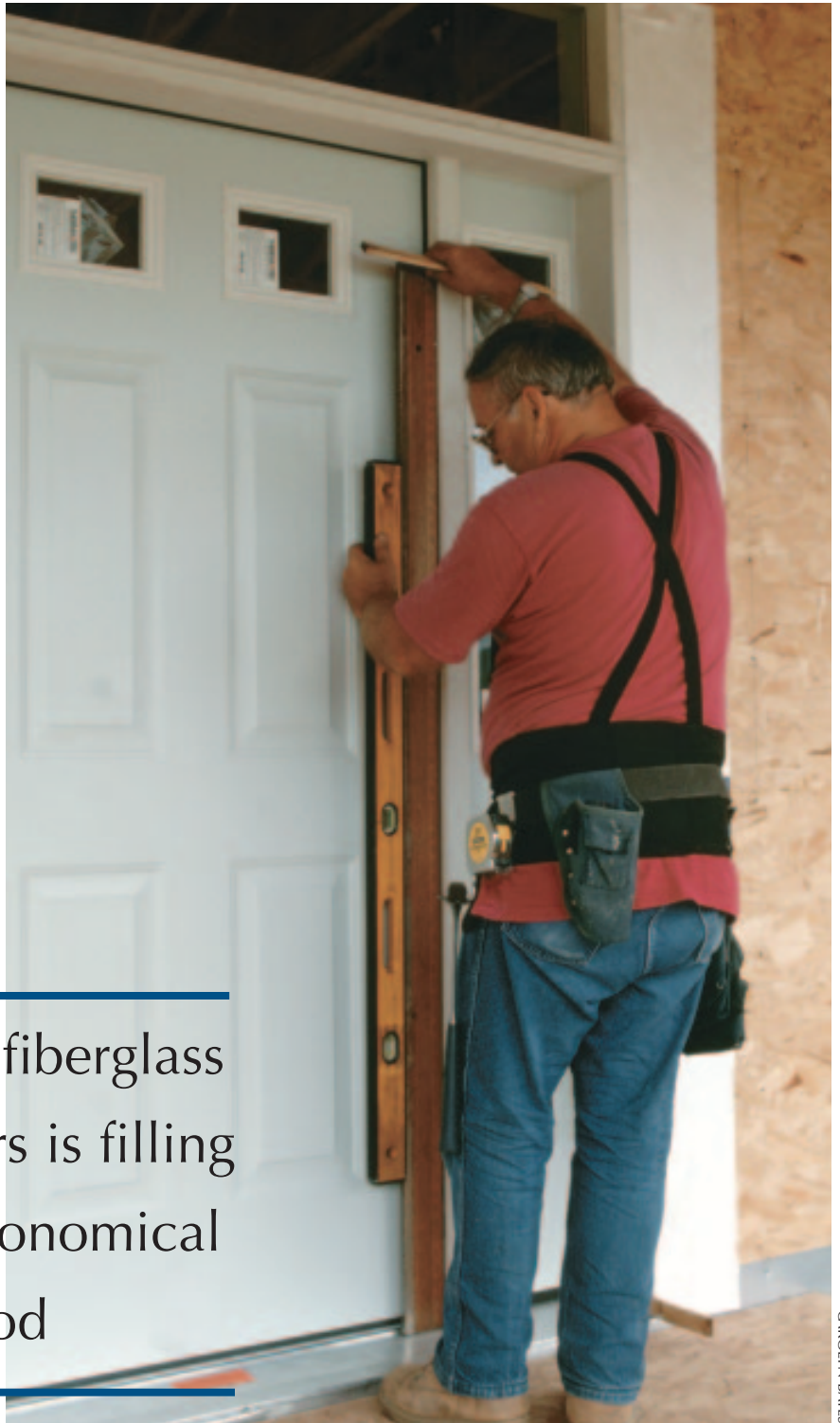
and wood are still popular, but they now face some stiff competition from fiberglass doors. A number of manufacturers have recently introduced composite doors with exterior-grade hardboard skins, and several less familiar options — including solid MDF and vinyl — are also available.

In addition to new door materials, door manufacturers have rolled out new features to entice buyers, such as operable sidelights and built-in electronics. There's also been a trend toward an ever expanding range of ornamental glazing options, including frosted, stained, and cut glass. While the door industry is too large to survey completely here, this article should provide a snapshot of some interesting recent developments.

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A growing range of fiberglass and composite doors is filling the gap between economical steel and costly wood

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CAROLYN BATES

## Steel Doors

Steel doors have a lot going for them. They're energy efficient, inexpensive, reasonably good looking, and available in any number of styles. Despite their susceptibility to dents and rust, they're still the first choice of many budget-conscious builders and consumers, reportedly accounting for 70% of all exterior doors sold.

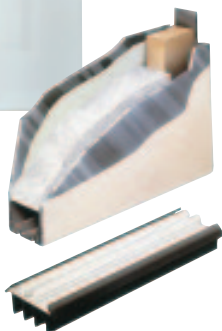
### DoorCraft

A steel door can't rot, but a wood bottom rail in a steel door can and sometimes does. With that ugly possibility in mind, DoorCraft has replaced the wood bottom rails in its entire line of steel doors with a ribbed steel section that's said to be longer lasting and more stable. The cost of the improved doors is unchanged.

**DoorCraft**, Klamath Falls, Ore., 541/882-3451, [www.doorcraftdoors.com](http://www.doorcraftdoors.com)



DoorCraft



### Stanley

Stanley's newest generation of its Sta-Tru Plus steel doors features eight decorative glass collections to choose from. Also new is the company's 3/4 oval Sta-Tru doors, which offer oval glazing in three choices of styles. In both doors, the decorative glass panel is sealed between inner and outer panes of clear glass for increased thermal efficiency and ease in cleaning.

**Stanley**, New Britain, Conn., 800/782-6539, [www.stanley-works.com](http://www.stanley-works.com)

### Peachtree

Peachtree's patented p+l (panel plus light) entry door system makes use of an operable sidelight that can be opened in tandem with the door, adding up to 14 inches of width to the opening to simplify moving furniture and large appliances. A matching fixed sidelight on the other side of the door is available as an option. The system comes in three widths for both steel and fiberglass doors.

**Peachtree**, Norcross, Ga., 800/732-2499, [www.peach99.com](http://www.peach99.com)



Stanley



Peachtree

## Wood Doors

Synthetic materials may be more practical, but some upscale home buyers demand the warmth of a real wood door. They still have plenty of choices: Although steel and fiberglass have driven most moderately priced wood doors from the marketplace, expensive and very expensive doors have a secure niche. Customers who are used to non-wood doors may need to be educated about the importance of maintaining the finish on a wood door. And while door manufacturers themselves seldom mention it, it's also worth noting that even the finest wood door may not stand up under severe weather exposure. For best long-term results, wood doors should be placed beneath some sort of overhang to protect them from rain and direct sun.

### Simpson

Simpson's new Craftsman collection of Douglas fir, western hemlock, and red oak doors come in heights of 6 feet 8 inches, 7 feet, and 8 feet. A wide variety of  $\frac{3}{4}$ -thick triple-glazing options are also available, including clear glass, glass with black patina or silver zinc coming, and bullion "bull's-eye" glass.

**Simpson**, McCleary, Wash., 800/952-4057, [www.simpsondoor.com](http://www.simpsondoor.com)

### Kolbe & Kolbe

Like Simpson, Kolbe & Kolbe is going with a Craftsman look in its newest line of doors. Available in Douglas fir, knotty alder, and knotty pine, the new doors feature solid edge bands and a stable LVL core. Several sidelight and sealed glazing options are available; the knotty alder model shown here has insulated true divided lights and an optional mantel.

**Kolbe & Kolbe**, Wausau, Wisc., 800/955-8177, [www.kolbe-kolbe.com](http://www.kolbe-kolbe.com)

### Phoenix Door Manufacturing

If a big, dramatic entry door is what you're after, Phoenix Door can probably provide it. In addition to the usual 6-8, 7-0, and 8-0 heights, the company will build custom doors up to 14 feet tall and 5 feet wide. Its top-of-the-line Century Collection doors are a beefy  $2\frac{1}{4}$  inches thick and are available in a wide range of wood species.

**Phoenix Door**, Tustin, Calif., 800/622-0688, [www.phoenixdoor.com](http://www.phoenixdoor.com)

### Madawaska Doors

Canadian-made Madawaska doors are crafted from solid wood and are available in an almost unlimited range of sizes and wood species, as outlined in the company slogan "Any size, any design, any wood, any time." Shown here is a design from the company's new Exotic Series, featuring curved maple panels and black cherry stiles and rails.

**Madawaska Doors**, Barry's Bay, Ontario, 800/263-2358, [www.madawaska-doors.com](http://www.madawaska-doors.com)

### Lamson-Taylor Custom Doors

The high-end custom doors from this New Hampshire shop feature true floating-panel mortise-and-tenon construction, with an innovative twist: Each door panel consists of a sandwich of two layers of solid wood over a half-inch core of polyiso board. According to the company, decoupling the inner and outer surfaces reduces or eliminates stresses on the door caused by differences in temperature and humidity between indoors and out. The oak door shown here features carved linenfold panels.

**Lamson-Taylor Custom Doors**, South Acworth, N.H., 603/835-2992, [www.lamsontaylor.com](http://www.lamsontaylor.com)



Simpson



Kolbe & Kolbe



Madawaska Doors

Phoenix Door Manufacturing



Lamson-Taylor Custom Doors



## Fiberglass Doors

Fiberglass doors have emerged as the missing link between low-cost steel and expensive wood. Like steel, the new fiberglass doors are good insulators and won't swell or warp during a wet winter or dry and crack in a dry summer. At the same time, they're typically more "woodlike" in appearance than steel doors, which adds to their appeal with homeowners. Fiberglass doors also shrug off bumps and blows that would leave a visible ding in a steel door. That simplifies life for the builder, who can install a finish door while work is still underway elsewhere in the house and be reasonably confident that it won't be a mass of dents by the time the job is done.

### Therma-Tru

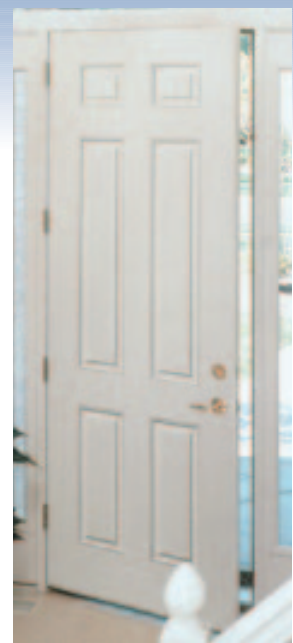
Heavily "wood-grained" steel or fiberglass doors tend to call attention to the fact that they aren't real wood, because they bear little resemblance to a smooth, well-sanded wood door. Therma-Tru recently overcame that objection with its Smooth-Star line of fiberglass doors, which more closely mimics the appearance of painted wood. The raised panels have crisp edges that provide strong shadow lines. Fine detail lines also simulate the subtle joint lines between the stiles and rails on real wood doors.

**Therma-Tru Doors**, Maumee, Ohio, 800/843-7628, [www.thermatru.com](http://www.thermatru.com)

### Stanley

Stanley has recently introduced its own line of smooth-surfaced fiberglass doors that provide a realistic painted-wood look. Like the company's other prehung fiberglass and steel doors, they are available as part of Stanley's Welcome Watch system, which includes a range of features that many electronics-savvy homeowners will love: The door jams contain built-in low-intensity lighting that automatically turns on at dusk and off at dawn, while two motion-activated spotlights switch on when a guest (or intruder) approaches the door. Finally, a portable remote control unit — similar to those used for vehicles equipped with keyless entry systems — makes it possible to lock and unlock the door from a distance, eliminating the need to fumble for a key when your arms are full of groceries. The system adds about \$300 to the cost of a conventional prehung door.

**Stanley**, New Britain, Conn., 800/782-6539, [www.stanleyworks.com](http://www.stanleyworks.com)



Therma-Tru Doors



Stanley



International Wood Products

### International Wood Products

As its name suggests, IWP is best known for its wood doors, but the company's new fiberglass-faced Aurora doors are said to offer the appearance of wood without the maintenance headaches. According to the company, the fiberglass molds were originally created by taking impressions of actual high-quality wood doors. Unlike urethane-filled fiberglass doors, which have a characteristic lightweight feel, the Aurora doors are built around a solid core that's also said to provide a more convincing "knock."

**International Wood Products**, San Diego, Calif., 800/468-3667, [www.iwpdoors.com](http://www.iwpdoors.com)

### Pella

Pella's new Carbonite doors are faced with a proprietary carbon-reinforced fiberglass that the manufacturer claims is thicker, stronger, and more resistant to thermal deflection than conventional fiberglass. Available with either walnut or oak graining, the doors can be stained or painted.

**Pella**, Pella, Iowa, 641/621-1000, [www.pella.com](http://www.pella.com)



Pella

## Engineered Wood

Engineered wood doors — sometimes called composite doors — are a recent development in the industry. Generally speaking, these paintable doors are designed to fill the price and performance gap between steel and fiberglass doors. Like solid wood doors, they're best used beneath a protective overhang.

### DoorCraft

DoorCraft's new Alterna Series doors feature a smooth molded wood-fiber and plastic resin skin that a manufacturer's representative compares to the substrate used in laminate flooring. A polystyrene core and internal LVL frame provide structural strength. Alterna doors are available in smooth or wood-grain versions, can be stained or painted, and carry a ten-year guarantee.

**DoorCraft**, Klamath Falls, Ore., 541/882-3451, [www.doorcraftdoors.com](http://www.doorcraftdoors.com)



DoorCraft

### Premdor

Premdor's Colorado entry door is said to be highly resistant to warping and buckling and much more dent resistant than steel. The door's high-density wood composite skin is backed by a poured-in-place polystyrene core. Colorado doors are guaranteed for ten years.

**Premdor**, Tampa, Fla., 800/663-3667, [www.premdor.com](http://www.premdor.com)



Premdor

### Simpson

A solid particleboard core gives Simpson's hard-board-faced Infinity door a hefty feel. The distinctive raised or flush moldings are routed from separate strips of MDF, which are precisely fitted into grooves in the door slab itself. The doors are manufactured in both interior and exterior versions, and fire ratings of up to 60 minutes are available for some models.

**Simpson**, McCleary, Wash., 800/952-4057, [www.simpsondoor.com](http://www.simpsondoor.com)

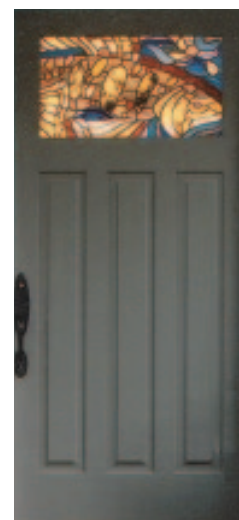


Simpson

### Bolection Door

Bolection's heavy, solid-feeling doors are exactly that. Each is a single slab of exterior-grade MDF, shaped to the desired pattern with computer-controlled routing equipment. Curved panel designs are a specialty, but square-panel designs, like the historical reproduction shown here, have sharp, hand-chiseled corners. The doors are double sanded and primed on all surfaces and edges.

**Bolection Door**, Greensboro, N.C., 888/511-5209, [www.bolectiondoor.com](http://www.bolectiondoor.com)



Bolection Door

