

GARAGE DOOR BUYING GUIDE

What to Consider When Buying a New Garage Door



How old is your garage door? 10-20 years old? Maybe even older. It's not everyday your faced with picking out a new garage door for your home. You may not know what to look for when making this big decision. Garage doors are often a main focal point to the front of a house. A beautiful door can add curb appeal, while an old or inadequate door can detract from a homes beauty. Buying the right door is very important, but not just aesthetically, there are several factors to consider when choosing your new door.

This guide will explain the options you need to consider including material, insulation type, durability, spring systems and operation, window and color options, and security.

Best Garage Door Materials

Steel

The majority of garage doors sold today are steel. Steel is durable, inexpensive, and usually comes with a virtually maintenance-free finish. One concern is a steel door can be susceptible to rust. It is recommended to choose a door with a baked on polyurethane primer and durable baked on polyester top coat to provide the maximum corrosion resistance. Top manufacturers offer lifetime rust-through warranties.

Wood

Wood doors have become less common because of the maintenance and cost. A good quality wood door can be quite expensive, and even the highest quality wood requires yearly maintenance, including painting or staining. Some unique designs can be found in wood, but steel has come a long way in imitating the look and feel of wood. It is recommended for homeowners to look for a wood door that has clear-rails as opposed to finger joints and is solid wood not just a wood skin.

Aluminum

Aluminum broke onto the garage door scene in the last 5-10 years. It seems like an ideal material especially in areas with high rain or snowfall because of its corrosion resistance. Because it is still a new product the styles available in aluminum are limited and often expensive. Aluminum cannot rust like steel and is lighter than steel. However it is also not as durable as steel and could be more costly to maintain.

Insulation Material and Value

Whether you heat your garage or not is not the only thing you have to consider when deciding to buy an insulated or uninsulated garage door. Insulating a door also quiets the rattle of a steel door and makes the door more durable. Uninsulated doors are recommended for use on detached garages and shed. They are one thin layer of steel with a metal frame and hollow back. Doors can be insulated with a polystyrene or polyurethane and come with either a vinyl coating on the back or a finished steel interior. Polystyrene will yield the lowest R-value ranging on average from 6-9. Most polystyrene doors have a vinyl protective coating on the back side, but are unfinished. Polyurethane insulated doors yield higher R-values, ranging between 10-18, depending on the thickness of the insulation and come with a finished steel back. Homeowners should also consider the bottom weatherseal available for their door. Some are better at keeping out the weather, some are easier to adjust, and some are easier to replace if damaged.

Spring Systems

There are two main types of garage door spring systems, extension and torsion. Some manufactures offer an enclosed spring system. This enclosed spring system was designed for ease of installation for the do it yourselfer and to give a clean appearance to a finished garage. It is not generally recommended because of the high cost and limited availability for repairs, and because homeowners don't see the broken spring and continue to run their doors which can cause strain and damage to door sections and openers. For these reasons most manufacturers are moving away from this type of system. Torsion springs are the most popular type used. They are stronger, last longer, and are safer than their counterparts because they are contained by the steel torsion bar they ride on. Extension springs are easier than torsion for the do it yourself installer, but the only thing holding them from flying like a rocket when they break is a thin safety cable. Torsion springs require more room above the door for mounting so cannot be used in tight spaces.

Tracks and Hardware

Tracks are similar between manufactures and there are only a few configurations. For residential it is uncommon to see high lift or vertical lift tracks, but if you have very high ceilings in your garage these are some options to maximize your space. The reverse of this is low headroom tracks. These are used when you only have a few inches above the door available including garages with low ceilings or beams. Standard tracks require between 12"-17" of headroom. Homeowners should consider cars to be parked in the garage and walk doors the door has to go around when choosing a track radius. For most doors hinges and rollers are universal, with a few that use their own specialty hinges. High quality rollers will have 10-11 ball bearings. Nylon rollers are quieter and more durable than steel rollers.

Style Options

Styles options have come a long way from the raised panel or flush white doors from 15 years ago. While many builders still use this versatile design, most home owners prefer other options. Panel design and color choices depend on the house design and the customers personal choice. Shaker style doors are becoming more popular but can be more expensive. Some home owners chose a color that matches their house color or trim. Other homeowners want the door to pop and opt for a complimentary color. Faux wood colors are available and are great accents to almost any décor. Most doors whether steel or wood can be painted. Windows are another way to add a decorative element to a door and are available in several options. Some manufacturers offer windows with a leaded glass look. And some designs are removable inserts so they can be changed as trends change. Most doors come with clear glass, but frosted glass and other textured or colored glass is available. Plexiglass is a safe alternative to glass to prevent breakages from kids playing and prevent break-ins.