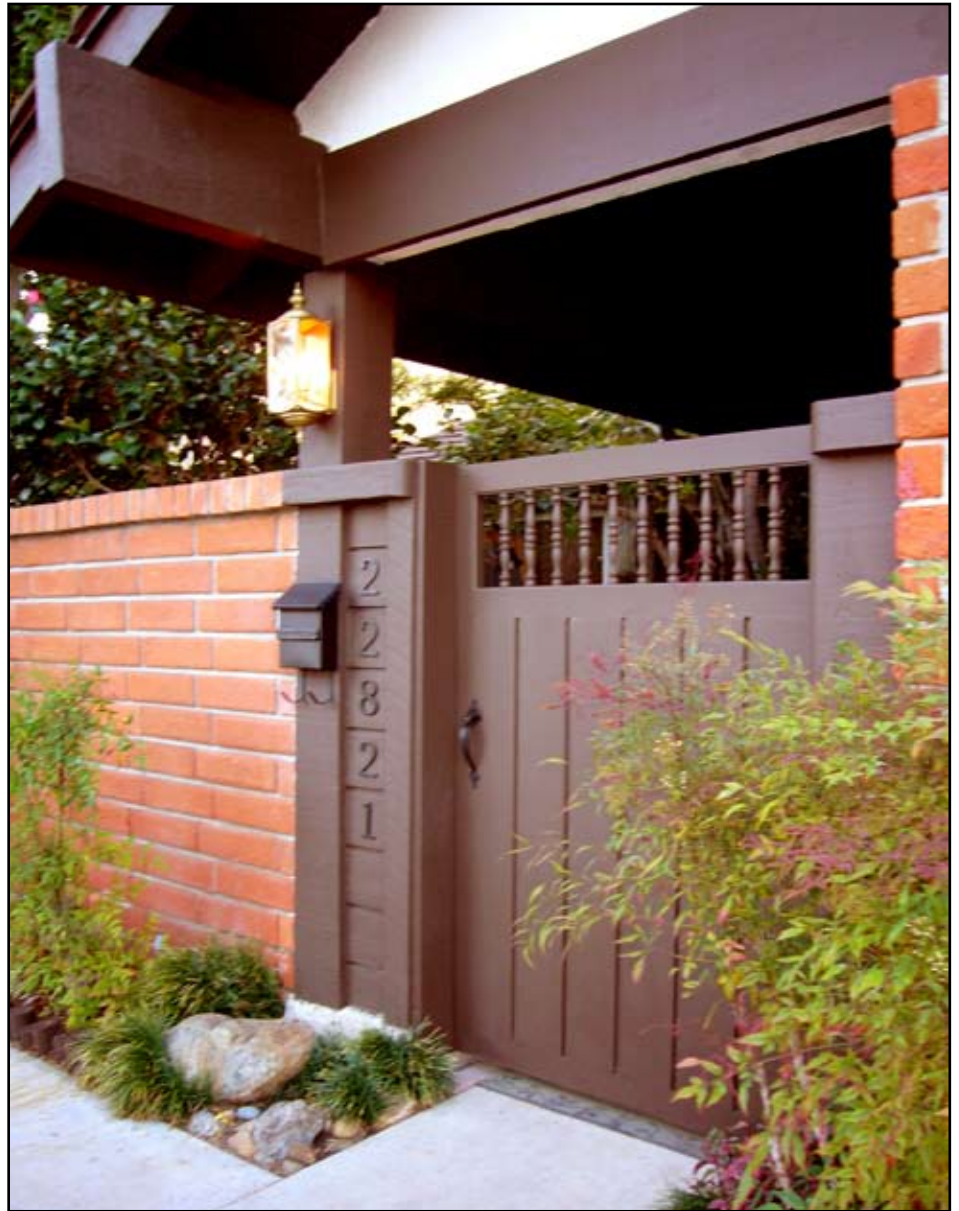


# GATE

By Jackson Sellers  
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Yoshi spends money on our gardens. I spend money on our house. Once upon a time, when I was younger and friskier, our garden and house budgets were about the same. Home maintenance now costs more, much more, because I don't do it myself anymore. I hire it done, and I kibitz while it's being done, with nothing but a coffee mug in hand. A man pushing 80 has a right to do that. The gate at right, entryway into our courtyard and the walkway leading to our front door, has been refurbished. Nothing here is new. The wooden gate, its supporting timbers, and the thick brick wall wrapping around the courtyard, all look today as they did more than 30 years ago when I designed and built them. I was in my 40s then, working at night as a *Los Angeles Times* editor, which gave me daylight hours for masonry and woodworking jobs. It took six months to create the private courtyard. But time, especially when measured in decades, takes a toll



on exterior woodwork, so I recently put my handyman to work. *Make the entire front of the house look new again*, I told him. Detailing was what I wanted, not just painting. He did a good job. Stucco and clapboard were repaired. Cracks in fascia boards and checkering of beam ends were filled. Lots of sealant was applied. The gate was removed, laid flat on sawhorses, cinched up with screws, and subjected to a gritty belt-sander. Even my old mailbox, with the "SELLERS" name plate that I chiseled three decades ago, got tender loving care. It was repainted with a hard-shell enamel that will surely last

my lifetime. My handyman also refurbished the gate light mounted on the post above the mailbox. He removed the fixture, took it somewhere, and brought it back a couple of days later. Even in mere daylight, it gleams golden, maybe too golden for our tastes. We might prefer antique gold, something more muted. But the handyman is proud of it, so what the hell. Yoshi always frowns when I instigate home projects, one after the other. She would rather spend the money in Japan. But I resist forcefully. I won't sacrifice a thing at home, not a single thing, to add a few more days to our already lengthy vacations across the Pacific.