How to Choose Doors That Create a Better Connection to the Garden in Leatherhead

Start with the goal: a smooth link between indoors and out

The door you choose between your home and garden does more than keep the weather out. It frames the view, sets the mood, and decides how easily you move between living spaces. A well-chosen door can make a small garden feel like an extra room, or turn a patio into a natural extension of the kitchen. The aim is to create a transition that feels effortless, not a barrier you have to think about.

Before looking at materials or styles, think about how you actually use the space. Do you carry plates and glasses in and out during summer meals? Do you want children to run between the lawn and the playroom without tripping over a high threshold? Are you planning a garden office or a studio that needs a clean, wide opening? Your answers will guide every later decision, from the number of panels to the type of track system.

Consider the opening width and the number of panels

The width of the opening determines how many door panels you need and how they fold. A single wide panel can work for a narrow passage, but most garden connections benefit from multiple panels that stack neatly to one side. This creates a nearly full-width opening when the doors are open, so the boundary between inside and garden almost disappears.

Think about the available wall space on either side of the opening. If you have limited room for stacked panels, you might need a configuration that folds both ways or a design where panels slide rather than fold. Measure the opening carefully, and consider the usable floor space inside the room. A door that opens inward can eat into that space, so outward-opening or folding designs are often better for tight rooms.

View the location on Google Maps

Threshold detail: the make-or-break detail for flow

A raised threshold is one of the most common reasons a garden door feels awkward. It forces you to step over it every time, which becomes tiresome when you are carrying things or when children and older visitors use the door. A low or flush threshold solves this, creating a level transition from the indoor floor to the outdoor surface.

Watch out for the drainage requirements of a low threshold. Water can pool at the base of the door if the external ground slopes toward the house or if the threshold design does not include

a hidden drainage channel. Ask about the weather resistance of the threshold system, especially in exposed gardens where rain drives against the door. A well-designed low threshold will have a small ramp or a drainage groove that keeps water out without creating a trip hazard.

Track system: how the panels move and stay aligned

The track system is the mechanical backbone of any folding door. A top-hung system keeps the threshold clear because the weight of the panels hangs from an overhead rail. This gives the cleanest floor line, but it requires a strong lintel or structural support above the opening. A bottom-rolling system supports the panels on a floor track, which can be lower profile but still needs a small channel in the floor.

Some systems use a combination of top and bottom tracks for extra stability on very wide panels. The quality of the rollers and the track material matters a lot. Nylon or steel rollers on an aluminium track tend to run smoothly for years. Cheaper plastic rollers can wear quickly and make the doors hard to slide. Ask about the warranty on the track components and whether replacement parts are available if something breaks later.

Door panels: material, glazing and insulation

The panels themselves need to balance strength, insulation and appearance. Aluminium frames are light and strong, and they hold large panes of glass without sagging over time. uPVC is a common choice for budget-conscious projects, and it offers good thermal insulation, but the frames can be bulkier. Timber frames give a warm, traditional look but require more maintenance to stop them swelling or warping in wet weather.

Double or triple glazing is standard for any door that connects a heated room to the outside. Look for a low U-value to keep the heat inside during winter. The glass should also be toughened or laminated for safety, especially if the door is at ground level where someone might walk into it. Consider solar control glass if the garden side gets strong afternoon sun, as it reduces glare and stops the room overheating.

TP Improvements is also on LinkedIn.

Weather resistance and security

A door to the garden faces rain, wind and temperature changes more directly than a front door sheltered by a porch. The seals between panels and around the frame need to be robust. Multi-point locking systems are standard on most modern folding doors, and they help pull the panels tight against the seals when closed. Check that the locking points engage at the top and bottom of each panel, not just in the middle.

Drainage slots in the frame should be clear and designed so that water runs out without being able to blow back in. Some manufacturers include a weather bar or a drip groove at the bottom of the frame. If you live in a very exposed area, ask whether the system has been tested for wind resistance and water tightness at high wind speeds.

Access route and garden layout

The door is only part of the connection. Think about the path that leads from the door into the garden. A few steps down from the door to the lawn can break the sense of flow. If the garden is on a different level, a small deck or patio at the same height as the indoor floor can bridge the gap. This creates a single level surface from the room to the garden, so the door becomes a true opening rather than a step up or down.

Consider the direction the door opens and which side the panels stack on. If your garden furniture or a raised bed sits on one side, you want the panels to stack on the opposite side so the opening is clear. Mark the swing and stack areas with tape on the floor before finalising the design. It saves disappointment later.

Bi-fold doors and the garden office connection

Many homeowners now add a garden office or a studio at the end of the garden. A good set of **bi-fold doors** on that building can make it feel more open to the garden, especially in warmer months. The same principles apply: a low threshold, a smooth track system, and enough glazing to let in light without losing heat. If the garden office is small, a folding door that opens fully to one side can double the usable floor space by blurring the line between the interior and the garden.

One thing to watch with a garden office is that the door must be secure when the building is unoccupied. Choose a system with a good locking mechanism and toughened glass. Also consider how the door will be used in winter. If you only open it a few times a year for ventilation, a simpler design may be fine. If you want to open it regularly, invest in a robust track system that won't stick after a few months of disuse.

Practical steps for choosing

Start by measuring the opening width and height accurately. Note the available space for stacking panels on each side. Decide on the threshold height you can accept. Then compare a few systems from different manufacturers. Ask to see them in a showroom so you can feel how smoothly the panels slide and how well the seals close. Check the depth of the frame, the quality of the handles and the finish on the aluminium or uPVC.

Ask about installation. A poorly fitted folding door will leak, stick or sag, no matter how good the product. The installer should understand how to level the track, seal the frame against the wall, and adjust the panels so they fold evenly. Get a written guarantee for both the product and the installation work.

Think about the long term. Aluminium frames need little more than a wipe with soapy water. Timber frames need repainting or staining every few years. If you choose timber, make sure the wood is treated for exterior use and that the joints are sealed against moisture ingress.

Final practical points

Bi-fold doors are a popular choice for garden connections because they open up a wide space without the sliding panels taking up wall room inside. But they are not the only option. Sliding doors, French doors, or a simple single door with a large glass panel can also work well, depending on the opening width and the style of the house. The key is to match the door type to the way you live and the size of the opening.

Visit a local showroom to see the options in person. A specialist can show you the difference between a top-hung and a bottom-rolling system, and let you test the smoothness of the action. Take your measurements and a photo of the opening. That way you get accurate advice and a quote that fits your project.

For more information on suitable doors for your home, contact TP Improvements at Unit 16, Mole Business Park, Leatherhead KT22 7BA, UK, or call +44 1372 203040.