

# Front Yards

## *What the World Sees*

by Alan Harris

IF YOU WALK THROUGH my neighborhood, you will notice great variety in the front yards of the houses. For that matter, you notice great variety in the back yards too, if you know the people well enough to go back there or if you're a burglar. Some of the yards are plain--just a sidewalk, maybe a concrete driveway, a tree or two, and grass. Others have a variety of windmills, bird feeders, statues of animals or saints, boulders or rocks, and flower gardens. We sort of wear our front yards on our shirt-sleeves, to terribly mix a metaphor (and to split an infinitive).

Is it that our front yards are how we want people to see us, and our back yards are how we really are? There may be something to consider here. And inside the house, the living room is for how we think people think we should be, and the family room is for how we really are. Just as our body has a skin to cover up its ugly internals, and clothing to cover up the unseemly parts of the skin, we seem to have to arrange our houses and lots in a dualistic fashion--one part the facade, and the other part the genuine.

Some folks go to great lengths to keep even their family rooms very presentable to the public, while others may have living rooms that look like a used stable, so we have these exceptions to the internal-external phenomenon I have been developing here. But there's always something, even in the homeliest of homes, that is meant to be presented to the public--a bowling trophy, a picture of the family (after all, we know what we look like), a mounted muskie, or whatever other thing we might be just a bit proud of and want to display to the world.

Next time you take a walk around a neighborhood, notice the front yards. You will see some of the most pampered grass and some of the most "natural" grass. You will see the yellow beauty of dandelions in some, and the healthy green evidence of weed killers in others. Some yards will be full of happy children, while others will be silent and empty. Some will have grassless cracks in the sidewalk, while others will luxuriate with various weeds sprung from whatever last year's wind blew in.

In a way we *are* our yards. We are both our front yard and our back yard. We are the external and the internal. Most people walking by see only half of us (our front yard), but if they look deep inside themselves, they see our back yard too, because they know what their own looks like. I pick this little dandelion from my back yard and offer it to you.