

# in the garden

BY STEPHEN AND KRISTIN PATEGAS

## A Cold-Hardy Backbone



Kristin and Stephen Pategas

Still suffering freeze shock? Our bones have finally warmed up but throughout neighborhood gardens there is still evidence of plants unhappy with the cold. They show their disapproval with blackened foliage and even worse - death. Don't blame them. It was a well-meaning gardener who planted them outside of their cold hardiness zone.

We moved to Florida in 1982 and received our rude weather education on Christmas morning in 1983 when we awoke to temperatures in the mid-twenties and rolling brownouts. All of the house plants we had brought from Massachusetts that were thriving outdoors were now...dead. Major freezes struck again in January of 1985 and ho, ho, ho, at Christmas of 1989. Where was the gardening paradise we heard about?

Florida has a number of USDA plant hardiness zones based on average annual minimum temperatures. North Florida is Zone 9a, Central is 9b (that's us at 25-30 degrees) and South is 10a/b to 11. Within all of these Zones there are variations based on micro-climate and sometimes the temperatures drop below the average and more tender plants say ouch.



Cross vine blooms attract hummingbirds

We took good notes after each freeze and we make sure every garden design we create has a backbone of cold-hardy plants. These plants will make it through this last winter or the legendary freezes of the 80's with barely a shiver. To minimize impacts to the aesthetics of your garden and the budget, use backbone plants for specimens, privacy hedges and masses of groundcover. Who needs peek-a-boo screening from the neighbors? Tender plants should be limited to protected areas or containers which can be moved. Remember you may be travelling when a freeze hits.

So if you are seduced by sexy South Florida plants, limit the

number you add to your cold-hardy plantings and your pocketbook won't take a hit. Listed on the right is a selection of plants for Central Florida that typically will show no or minimal foliage or twig damage if temperatures drop into the mid to upper-twenties. 🌿



The pindo palm has gray-green fronds

### PALMS/CYCADS

Pindo palm/*Butia capitata*  
European fan palm/*Chamaerops humilis*  
Chestnut dioon/*Dioon edule*  
Sabal palm/*Sabal palmetto*  
Saw palmetto/*Serenoa repens*

### TREES

Red bud/*Cercis canadensis*  
Fringe tree/*Chionanthus virginicus*  
Yaupon holly/*Ilex vomitoria*  
Crape myrtle/*Lagerstroemia indica*  
Southern magnolia/*Magnolia grandiflora*  
Live oak/*Quercus virginiana*  
Bald cypress/*Taxodium distichum*  
Winged elm/*Ulmus alata*

### SHRUBS/ACCENTS

Pineapple guava/*Acca sellowiana*  
Century plant/*Agave americana*  
Hedge bamboo/*Bambusa multiplex*  
Camellia/*Camellia japonica/sasquana*  
Dwarf Burford holly/*Ilex cornuta 'Dwarf Burford'*  
Yellow anise/*Illicium parviflorum*  
Tea olive/*Osmanthus fragrans*  
Yew podocarpus/*Podocarpus macrophyllus*

### GROUNDCOVERS

Cast iron plant/*Aspidistra elatior*  
Camellia sasanqua '*Shishigashira*'  
Holly fern/*Cyrtomium falcatum*  
Juniper/*Juniperus* species  
Liriope '*Emerald Goddess*'  
Mondo grass/*Ophiopogon japonicus*  
Dwarf Asian jasmine/*Trachelospermum asiaticum*

### VINES

Cross vine/*Bignonia capreolata*  
Carolina Jessamine/*Gelsemium sempervirens*  
Confederate jasmine/  
*Trachelospermum jasminoides*  
Southern Home grape

### ORNAMENTAL GRASSES

Muhly grass/*Muhlenbergia capillaris*  
Bamboo muhly grass/*Muhlenbergia dumosa*  
Evergreen paspalum grass/*Paspalum quadrifarium*  
Fakahatchee grass/*Tripsacum dactyloides*

### PERENNIALS/HERBS

Bulbine frutescens '*Hallmark Tangerine*'  
Tickseed/*Coreopsis lanceolata*  
Indian blanket/*Gaillardia pulchella*  
Lavender/*Lavendula* species  
Mints/*Mentha* species  
Parsley/*Petroselinum* species  
Thyme/*Thymus* species

Kristin and Stephen Pategas design landscapes and garden at their home and business Hortus Oasis in Winter Park. Contact them at [garden@hortusoasis.com](mailto:garden@hortusoasis.com) and visit [www.hortusoasis.com](http://www.hortusoasis.com) and [www.pategaion-plants.com](http://www.pategaion-plants.com).

All photography by Stephen G. Pategas/Hortus Oasis