

in the garden *by Stephen and Kristin Pategas*



STEPHEN & KRISTIN PATEGAS

Bamboo - The Beauty Or The Beast?

It spreads uncontrollably. It swallows the garden, the house and your life. Fact or fiction? Shockingly it is inevitable – if you select the wrong bamboo. As new bamboo shoots emerge from the ground many feet away from the mother plant you will never want for a task. On the bright side, the waist line will shrink from the regular bending required to cut off these interlopers. After a few years, next door neighbors will gossip about you and then move away in the middle of the night.

Classified in the family of grasses, bamboos seduce with their willowy trunks (culms, or

humans and animals, including pandas, who eat the leaves. The wide diversity of the more than one thousand different species of bamboo means that those in the genus *Sasa* hug the ground as a groundcover while those in other genera soar to heights of 50 feet or more. The culms vary in width from less than a pencil to a hefty twelve-inches. They all need full to part sun and prefer well-drained soils with good moisture.

However when it come to spreading, bamboos have a split personality. Plant the beast-like running type of bamboo without a substantial concrete wall (set above the soil line and about three-feet below) to contain it and you may discover you want to place your house on the mar-



Golden Goddess bamboo provides privacy in our garden.



Giant timber bamboo culms reach a five-inch diameter.

ket. While running bamboos may travel under driveways and around swimming pools, the “behaved” bamboos slowly increase the width of the clump. Once the clump has reached the desired width it’s easy to cut off new soft shoots at the edge of the clump. As the shoots elongate and age, they harden. The clumping types are from the genus *Bambusa* and a few others. The different species offer a wide range in size, habit, culm diameters and colors and cold hardiness. With such a great diversity it’s critical to select the proper bamboo.

Our design palette of bamboos includes these clumping cold hardy types:

- Bambusa multiplex** - Hedge bamboo (25-30’ ht., 1.5” dia. culm)
- Bambusa multiplex ‘Alphonse Karr’** - Alphonse Karr bamboo (25-30’ ht., 1.5” dia. culm)
- Bambusa multiplex ‘Fernleaf’** - Fernleaf bamboo (10-12’ ht., .5” dia. culm, can shear into hedge)



Bamboo scaffolding cloaks a Hong Kong high rise.

- Bambusa multiplex ‘Golden Goddess’** - Golden Goddess bamboo (10-12’ ht., .5” dia. culm)
- Bambusa oldhamii** - Giant timber bamboo (55’ ht., 5” dia. culm)
- Bambusa textilis var. gracilis** - Slender Weaver’s bamboo (25-30’ ht., 1-1.5” dia. culm)
- Bambusa textilis ‘Mutabilis’** - Emerald bamboo (25-30’ ht., 2-3” dia. culm)
- Oatea acuminata aztecorum** - Mexican weeping bamboo (15-20’ ht., 1.2” dia. culm)

Select a clumping bamboo with the proper characteristics in the genus *Bambusa* and you will be one with your garden and your neighbors. ■

Hortus Oasis (FL26000315) in Winter Park is a boutique garden design company specializing in residential, commercial and specialty gardens. Stephen is a registered landscape architect and Kristin is a certified landscape designer. Contact them at 407.622.4886/ garden@hortusoasis.com

All photography by Stephen G. Pategas/Hortus Oasis