



Stephen & Kristin Pategas

in the garden by Stephen and Kristin Pategas

Challenge Us 2.0

We love a good challenge when it comes to consulting or designing a garden. We encourage our clients to share their concerns with us. In order to share them, we have once again put our heads together to develop this list with our suggestions.

“After ten (or twenty or thirty) years our landscape still doesn’t look good.” – Usually this means that conditions have changed drastically or there was never a professional landscape design. Planting locations did not take into account the site conditions and which plants thrive in them. Shade and sun conditions change over the years. The solution is to get a professional landscape design that takes into account these changes. Use it as a master plan and have a good irrigation system installed that follows the design.

“Plants that should flower, barely flower.” – We usually identify any or all of these four problems in descending order. 1. Shearing off of the flower buds – hand prune instead and find out the proper time to prune. 2. Too much shade. 3. Lack of adequate water. 4. Lack of nutrients – try a slow release fertilizer.



Shear away the buds and lose the blooms.

“Our paver walkway/ patio/ driveway has gaps and pavers now wander where they shouldn’t.” – This is a case of improper installation without an adequate restraining edge in our sandy soils. Once the pavers are tightly placed, a substantial concrete edge needs to be installed. Do not use metal rebar which rusts and swells to break apart the concrete.



Pavers must have a substantial solid edge to stay stable.

“Our formerly ‘no maintenance’ natural area has become a jungle.” – There are few areas in Florida, including urban yards, that are immune to the continuous attack from invasive plants. Trees such as camphor and Chinese tallow drop thousands of seeds that sprout readily; vines, such as skunk and potato, climb, creep and smother; while others such as sword fern and Mexican petunia spread aggressively. Some non-invasive plants spread and are not easily controlled. Vigilance in rooting them out, selecting the proper plants, mulching regularly and the judicious use of brush killers are solutions.

“The stone areas in my yard were supposed to be no maintenance. Now they are weedy. What happened?” – Sunlight, organic matter (aka soil), moisture and weed seeds have combined within crevices and the seeds sprouted. Remove and clean the soil from the stones regularly or replace with plants and renewable organic mulch (pine bark, pine needles, etc.). (See photo at right).

“That tree has barely grown.” – Odds are the tree is planted too deep and/or the tree was root bound when purchased. If the tree was recently planted, it can be dug up, the root ball scored or shaved and then replanted at the proper depth with the top main root exposed. Otherwise, remove it and start over with a quality tree/root ball planted at the proper depth.



Do not bury the top main root, expose the root flare above grade.



Stone mulch is guaranteed to sprout weeds.