



Stephen & Kristin Pategas

in the garden by Stephen and Kristin Pategas

Challenge Us 3.0

We continue to 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 with you we put our heads together to develop this list and added our solutions.

Why are the shrubs and small trees bare on the inside with just a shell of leaves? It sounds like there has been a shearing frenzy going on. Put away the shears and start hand pruning. Create small openings that increase airflow to reduce diseases and allow light to get into the plants to generate new growth. Get a bonus since the shrubs' life spans will lengthen.

We travel a lot but love to garden. If you want to maintain your own landscape but still travel, there are lower-maintenance plants and design strategies that allow you to satisfy your wander lust and still have a presentable garden. Use few if any vines, plants that grow slowly, and plants that require little to no pruning.

The hedge is full on the top but quite bare on the bottom. This is a perfect case of upside down trimming where a wider top shades the bottom. Trim the hedge in the shape of a pyramid with it wider at the base than the top. This allows the light to reach the bottom to stimulate growth.



Our new tree died even though it was getting irrigation. The tree probably needed more water. A newly planted tree requires an establishment period with additional irrigation. Larger trees need a longer establishment period. Use a hose to fill the soil saucer around the rootball twice per application: daily for the first week, every two days for the second to sixth weeks, twice a week for the seventh through twelfth weeks and then once a week for 3.5 months per inch of trunk caliper (diameter) at 12" height above the ground.



Why is the bark peeling off of the crape myrtle trunk? It's natural for the bark to peel. It's called exfoliation and the resulting patterns of light and dark are considered an asset. The Natchez cultivar of the crape myrtle is especially prized for this characteristic.



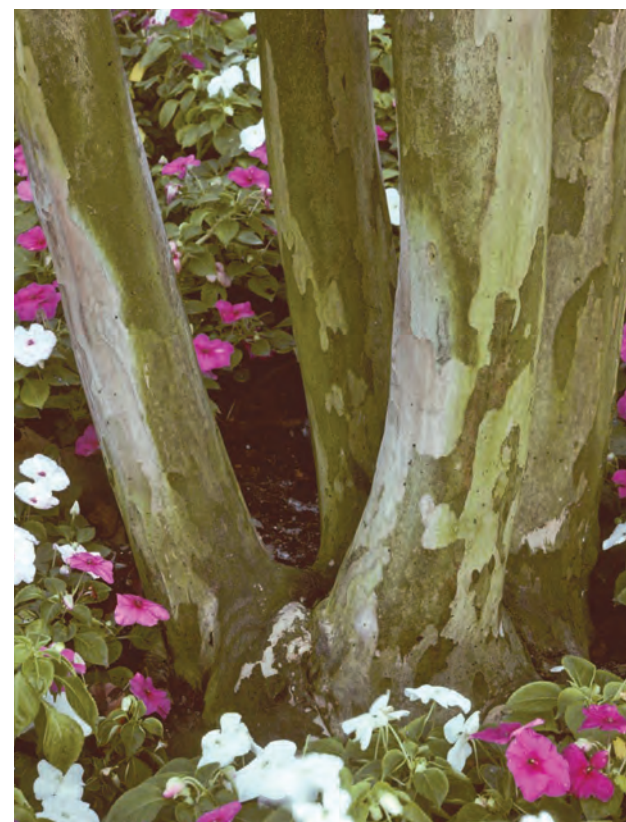
Top right: Shearing creates a dense unhealthy light blocking layer of foliage.

At left: Trim the hedge so it is wider at the base.

At right: The white blooming Natchez crape myrtle with exfoliating trunk.

Bottom: Tree roots have broken and lifted a sidewalk.

Our paver walkway is all uneven. Either tree roots have grown and expanded underneath the pavers and/or the pavers were improperly installed without a properly compacted sub-base or retaining edge. After careful root pruning, relay the pavers over sand and a compacted concrete fines sub-base. If they are on concrete, deal with the roots then pour new concrete and relay pavers.



Photos by Stephen G. Pategas/Hortus Oasis.