



Stephen & Kristin Pategas

in the garden by Stephen and Kristin Pategas

Challenge Us 4.0

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. To share them with you we created this list and added our solutions.



A clever homeowner posted a sign to help preserve their plants' health.

The maintenance crew won't let our hedge grow up to the height we want. – After notifying the company to change their practices, pound some stakes of metal rebar into the ground with the top at the height you want the plants to grow up to. The stakes will stand up to the shears and get their notice. Another option is to hang a bi-lingual sign on the plant.

Every time a frost or freeze is predicted, we struggle to figure out which plants need protection. – Homeowners and service personnel would benefit from the Design Intent Document we offer. It inventories the plants in a garden and provides the following information: suggested mature heights and widths, time of year to trim if they flower (preserves the flower buds), cold protection required, and other cultural information. Otherwise some research using a combination of books and web sources should do the trick.



Frost protection first step - add bamboo stakes to hold fabric away from foliage.



Frost protection second step - add fabric and fasten with bungee cord or rope.

Our new house has a landscape with weed mat everywhere and weeds are still sprouting all over the place. What's the deal? – The power of marketing has sold millions of square feet of a mostly useless product that is a waste of petroleum. Mulch on top of weed mat decomposes into soil and provides conditions for weeds to grow. Remove the useless weed mat and apply mulch directly on the soil. Maintain a 2 to 3 -inch depth of organic mulch such as pine bark or leaves from trees in the neighborhood. As the mulch slowly decays it will add organics and feed the plants just like they do in forests.

We planted all native plants and some of them look terrible. I thought natives are bulletproof? – Whether the plant is native to California, South Africa, China, or Orlando, to

thrive it must be planted in the right soil (pH and soil drainage) and light conditions and then obtain the necessary water and nutrients. Usually, urban areas have soils very different from the soils of Florida native plant habitats. Research the conditions in your garden and what the plant requires before purchasing them.

The wound from a branch removed from our tree is not healing. – Unfortunately, the damage has been done and the tree may never properly

seal off the cut. Make sure future branch removal cuts are made just outside the branch collar that can usually be seen as a ridge or swelling on the branch near the trunk. If in doubt, leave a slight branch stub which will rot away naturally.



Make a removal cut just beyond the branch collar which may be ridged.

All photography by Stephen G. Pategas/Hortus Oasis

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@hortus oasis.com