



STEPHEN &amp; KRISTIN PATEGAS

## in the garden by Stephen and Kristin Pategas

### Green Garden Design

A garden designed in an environmentally responsible manner saves resources and dollars and, if properly cared for, it can also look stunning. There are many strategies to employ to reduce the use of energy, labor and water.

A “green” garden design is the first step for the creation of a garden that doesn’t waste water. Start the design process with an analysis of the site: review the structures, soils, drainage, existing plants (including trees and the shade levels), and the irrigation system. Next determine the program for the use of the garden. During the design of the garden, select plants for aesthetic purposes as well as their water needs; then match them to the existing conditions (soils, drainage, low temperatures, and sun/shade levels) and the use program. If areas of grass are needed for children’s play or for pets, consolidate the turf and other water loving plants into an area watered separately - the high water zone. Since the aesthetics of the

plants are paramount, the design of a new irrigation system or the tweaking of an existing one must follow after the landscape design is created and include multiple programs and a rain sensor.

#### Other design and maintenance tips include:

- Place trees to shade the east and west sides of the house and always locate them in planting beds or wide mulch rings (two-foot beyond the trunk) to avoid damage from mowers and string trimmers.
- Eliminate or consolidate turf to minimize mowing and edging.
- Grow edibles and wildlife-friendly plants to give back to yourself and the environment.
- Provide low volume irrigation to each container with a separate irrigation program for all containers.
- Set a zero tolerance level for allowing aggressive and invasive plants on the property.



*Find the right plants in the right places in the gardens at Hortus Oasis*

They compete with the ornamental plants for nutrients and water and require additional labor to remove once established. They also travel into neighboring yards and beyond to infect natural areas.

- Stop the shearing of shrubs and ban power hedge trimmers from your property. Shearing shortens the life of plants and increases the frequency for pruning.
- Always use renewable organic mulches such as fallen leaves from trees, pine bark or pine needles instead of cypress mulch (harvesting of these trees harms wetlands) or stone. Mulch suppresses weeds, conserves water by holding moisture in the ground for plants to use, stops soil erosion, insulates roots from temperature extremes and when the mulch is organic, it feeds plants with its nutrients as it decomposes. Renew the mulch to keep a three-inch depth and weed seeds will not sprout on bare soil.
- To reduce the need for mulch, place plants at the proper spacing so they knit together and shade out weed seeds as they mature.

Design and maintain with the environment in mind and your wallet and garden will both have more green in them. ■



*Wildlife gardening may attract Gulf fritillary butterflies.*



*The pineapple is an easy edible to grow.*



*Low volume irrigation targets water delivery to the roots and is good for containers.*

*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@hortusoasis.com