



Stephen & Kristin Pategas

in the garden by Stephen and Kristin Pategas

All photography by Stephen G. Pategas/Hortus Oasis

Helpful Hints 1.0

Efficiency: since a whole day of weeding never makes it onto a calendar, pull a weed when it is spotted. To feel even better, pull another three.

Yummy plants: when growing edibles to eat, make sure a pest control company is not treating them with chemicals without your knowledge.

Citrus: what type of tree is that? Crush a leaf and give a sniff. From the fragrance, it is usually possible to differentiate between orange, lemon, lime, grapefruit, and maybe a tangerine.

Reduce stress: sharpen pruning blades regularly to ease the strain on the wrist and arms.

Pollinator gardens: make sure they are not being treated with chemicals that hurt insects – especially the pollinators the plants are meant to attract.

Container: when filling a container with potting soil, add the soil in increments (lifts) of about four inches and firmly pack it down by hand. This will minimize future settling.

Efficiency: wear a tool belt with favorite tools to save numerous steps. If exercise is needed, ignore this tip.

Money saving: use empty water bottles, milk jugs, etc. (caps on, please) in the bottom of containers, then less potting mix is needed. To fill the voids water in the soil frequently as it is installed.

Disease control: regular sanitization of pruning blades can save a plant from death.

Water feature water quality: use a safe-for-wildlife algaecide regularly and more frequently during the warmer months.

Noise masking: install a water feature with multiple dripping points to maximize the sound.

Constant turf replacement: change the turf to a groundcover plant, mulch, or artificial turf.

Money saving: make sure the rain sensor on the irrigation controller is functioning properly.

Weeds galore: Pull existing weeds before they flower and spread seeds and keep mulch levels at a minimum depth of two-to-three-inches. No bare soil allowed!

Resourceful: use fallen leaves for mulch.

Time saving: let healthy shrub trimmings remain on the ground and become mulch.

Resourceful: cut branches into smaller pieces to fit more into yard waste containers.

Caution: when working around palms, check under the fronds for wasp nests.

Efficiency: a hand pruner, loppers, and folding hand saw will handle most pruning.

Labor saving: remove invasive plants before they take over the garden.

Attract wildlife: add a water source to the garden.

Efficiency: store a pair of pruners in a weather-protected spot in the garden so there are fewer missed opportunity to trim a plant.

Take control: start vegetable plants from seed under a grow light, but if needed buy a few “starts” from a garden center to get ahead of the growing season.



At left: A gardening toolbelt will save many steps.
Below: Grow veggies and herbs from seed to get the exact cultivars desired.
Far right: A torrent of sound is generated by this water feature in the National Orchid Garden in Singapore.
At right: A mailbox in the garden is a great place to store gardening tools.

