

in the garden *by Stephen and Kristin Pategas*



STEPHEN & KRISTIN PATEGAS

## In Bloom Here And Nationwide

Beauty attracts the eye and in 2010 it sure brought us right back to Lewes, DE. We were on a three-week road trip up the East Coast visiting gardens and historical sites with Rehoboth

Beach, DE our destination for a family retreat. With record-breaking temperatures scorching us on the beach we looked for respite in nearby Lewes. This first-time visit bowled us over with the displays of color – bridges, fences, railings, doorways, windows, lamp posts and street corners dripping with blossoms in an orgy of color. With camera shutters clicking we worked our way through a few of the downtown streets. The population of only 2,700 residents was heavily outnumbered by blossoms. Why was this small quaint city with numerous historical buildings ablaze in color? A clue was a small sign framed by flowers that simply stated “Lewes in Bloom.” Family duties called us away but we promised ourselves we would return to explore further.

The outstanding show of color and the sign led us to suspect a connection to the “America in Bloom” program and an online search confirmed Lewes was to be judged the following day! With the planets aligned we headed back the next day to revel again in the efforts of the residents, explore the rest of the town and hopefully spot the judges. Well, Lewes won that year (as well as in 2003 and 2005) and they have a web site devoted to their program [www.lewesinbloom.org](http://www.lewesinbloom.org) which beautifies the city even when they don’t enter the national competition.

America in Bloom was started in 2001 and hundreds of cities in 40 states have competed, with judging based on beautification, cultural heritage, historic preservation and sustainability. Fast forward to 2013 with Winter Park and Winter Garden entered amongst the over two dozen cities competing nationwide. Stephen’s membership on the Keep Winter Park Beautiful and Sustainable board led to their sponsorship of Winter Park’s entry. We are calling our



Many sidewalks are lined with overflowing containers.

local group Winter Park Blooms and for this first year a handful of beautification projects will be identified. Organizations, residents, and city government will be encouraged to enhance our community by focusing on quality landscapes, environmental efforts and other critical issues in the outdoor environment. The judging is in early May.

If you wish to join the committee or volunteer please contact us. If you are traveling nationally, look to see if there are any cities that are competing ([www.americainbloom.org](http://www.americainbloom.org)). Visit one at just the right time (judging is completed by August) and like we did in Lewes, you may even bump into smiling judges. ■

All photography by Stephen G. Pategas/Hortus Oasis



This was the most unusual container we spotted in Lewes.



Annual color cascades down a fence.



Lewes in Bloom – the sign that tipped us off.

**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**