

in the garden *by Stephen and Kristin Pategas*



STEPHEN & KRISTIN PATEGAS

Ornaments That Tell A Story

Travelling inspires us. There are gardens to discover, historical sites to explore, museums to visit, and parks to hike. Shopping for garden ornaments usually plays a role.

We'll find garden shops, antique stores, garage sales (called tag sales in other parts of the country), and if we are lucky, salvage yards. Oh, the sacrifices we make to personalize a garden!

But making purchases a distance from home can add a certain level of stress – how do our new treasures get home? Unique objects, not always purchased at a bargain price, either fit into our luggage or the back of our van. Since there is the extra expense and the fear of loss or breakage, shipping is the last resort. For years we taught a week-long garden design class at the John C. Campbell Folk School in Brasstown, NC. Each trip home found us filling our already loaded van with old objects (many from England) we just had to have in our garden. After three years we had acquired enough chimney pots to create a themed garden space that combines plants with these unique ornaments.

While in Chicago we found a decorative terra cotta façade building block in the warehouse of a building salvage company. When a taxi wouldn't come to pick us up, the owner directed us to a bus stop out front. While carrying the large, heavy block in a milk crate (supplied by the owner who felt sorry for us) we climbed into the bus. After one bus transfer we hiked a few blocks and hauled it up to our 18th floor hotel room. It was a pretty classy hotel and we received strange looks in the elevator. On departure day our treasure was well packed in a carry-on bag with dirty laundry for cushioning. However it never made it into our garden. Instead it rests on our hearth as a reminder of what an impulse buy coupled with perseverance can accomplish.

In Frederick, MD at the cavernous and amazing Great Stuff by Paul, we discovered another piece of a building façade, this time from China. Too large for a suitcase, we shipped it back with other items including another chimney pot. Sadly, inspiration doesn't always arrive when it is needed so it was stored until we could figure out exactly what to do with it. After a year or so we realized that if we flipped it upside down, it would make a great planter. So it was filled with a well-draining potting mix topped with a colorful selection of succulents. It now holds court on our front terrace and never ceases to attract the eye of visitors. They make complimentary remarks which lead us to respond, "Well, we were at this cool place called..." ♦

Kristin and Stephen Pategas design landscapes and garden at their home and business Hortus Oasis in Winter Park. Contact them at garden@hortus oasis.com or visit www.hortus oasis.com and www.pategaionplants.com.



This Chinese artifact with succulents graces our terrace



Chimney pots are repurposed as containers



An ornament that came inside and never made it into our garden

All photography by Stephen G. Pategas/Hortus Oasis