

in the garden

BY STEPHEN AND KRISTIN PATEGAS

Pool Plants Create An Oasis



Kristin and Stephen Pategas

Oh, the therapeutic effects of a swimming pool - especially when it's in a plant-filled oasis. As much as we love to lounge in these calming areas many of them are rife with conflicts that compromise the enjoyment. Oversized plantings swell beyond tiny planters to push the screen limit and suck up pool deck play, lounge, and entertainment

space. Plant parts prick bare flesh, pop pool toys, and clog filters. Delicate plants are tormented by overflowing pools, feet, furniture, and airborne objects. Pools collect washed out mulch and soil. What's a pool owner to do?

How about the right planters and plants in the right places! To gain more hardscape space, replace in-ground planting areas with pavers or loose decorative stone over landscape fabric and set containers on the new surface. To reduce the need for hand watering, remember to run low-volume irrigation tubes into each pot prior to adding a new surface. If at all possible place the containers on their own irrigation zone and program to save water.

Know the plants' growth habits before they are planted. Select plants that will stay compact and note that containers will dwarf some plants due to a restricted root mass (bonsai-effect). Use broad leaved evergreens with minimal leaf, blossom, or seed drop. Stay away from plants that re-

Anthurium, tricolor stromanthe, and schefflera (L to R) thrive in light shade and the containers link both sides of the screen enclosure. Design by Hortus Oasis.



Tricolor oyster plants add a spark to a bed of mondo grass and a stone lantern. Design by Hortus Oasis.

quire shearing and look for ones that require little pruning. Run from bougainvilleas with thorns and those colorful papery flower bracts that easily take flight in a breeze. For flush in-ground planters lower the grade so the edge holds mulch. Then choose groundcovers that knit together, grow dense, and preserve soil and mulch in place. A spiky agave is not a good choice if there are kids, pets, or beach balls in the area.

If planting areas receive overflow from the pool, use especially tough plants in those areas. For moist areas use acorus, elephant ears (*Colocasia 'Elena'* stays compact), African and Regina iris. Tropicals such as white or orange birds of paradise may thrive better around a pool during a cold winter due to the warmer microclimate created by a body of water and a screen enclosure. Slow growing cold-hardy palms include European fan palm and the native silver or green saw palmetto. The clumping lady palm is great in the shade and the native low palm-like coontie will take sun or light shade.

Use similar plantings or ornaments on both sides of a screen enclosure to visually expand the space. One or two ornamental grasses used inside will provide a visual link to a mass of the same grasses outside. Pink muhly grass or evergreen paspalum will sway in the breeze and require minimal trimming.

Low water use succulents will thrive in containers if there is good drainage. For a complementary planting in the ground use the long blooming Hallmark bulbine and the pool plantings will seduce you to linger in the oasis.

Note: Check the Community Calendar for our November 11 program. 🌿

Kristin and Stephen Pategas design landscapes and garden at their home and business Hortus Oasis in Winter Park. Contact them at garden@hortusoasis.com and visit www.hortusoasis.com and www.pategaionplants.com. All photography by Stephen G. Pategas/Hortus Oasis