

in the garden by Stephen and Kristin Pategas



STEPHEN & KRISTIN PATEGAS

Pruning - Take Control

Pruning can be a very satisfying activity. Notice we didn't say task. For us it's a therapy session in the garden.

When pruning – you are in control. Not like dealing with pets, kids, significant others, or clueless sales help. Plants take whatever you dish out and don't talk back or leave something on your rug. Pruning, however, comes with responsibility. Although you can easily bend (prune) plants to your will, you need to think about the long term results. Feed the dog at the table once and...

For inspiration on pruning and taking responsibility we visited Pearl Fryar's Topiary Garden www.fryarstopiaries.com in Bishopville, SC (seven hours north of Orlando on I95). Pearl has single handedly mastered the art of topiary and created a delightfully whimsical garden that rivals and



A diversity of plant species at Pearl Fryar's garden

Pearl's arches soar and inspire



All photography by Stephen G. Pategas /Hortus Oasis

The nature of the plant inspires Pearl's trimming



in many ways exceeds better-known gardens. He has spent most of his life working full time while training young plants into maturity. The garden is so unique that the Garden Conservancy is making arrangements to preserve his beloved topiaries.

Topiary is the art of trimming the leaves and branches of live plants into shapes that may be fanciful or geometric. Many residential gardens have evergreen shrubs trimmed into whimsical shapes that range from columns and cones to small meatball-like spheres. Frequent pruning removes new growth as the plant either maintains or achieves its planned shape.

While you may not wish to have topiary in your garden you can use good pruning practices to maintain healthy and attractive plants.

- Plants with small leaves take frequent tight shearing better than those with large leaves which become misshapen and disease-prone.
- To keep a hedge in a healthy pyramidal shape so the light strikes the lower branches, lean into it as you prune so the top stays narrower than the base.
- Prune just above a bud or branch so a stub is not left behind.
- Prune plants such as azaleas that flower on new wood soon after they blossom so new flower buds aren't trimmed away.
- To get blooms, do not shear flowering plants such as loropetalum/fringe flower, camellias, and azaleas.

Pearl's handiwork was recorded in the readily available from Netflix documentary "A Man Named Pearl." His other passion is helping uninspired or average students who may not have done well in high school. He raises funds for scholarships funneled to those who have not reached their full potential and inspires them with his life story. As the twig is bent...perhaps it can even head off to college. ■

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.

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