

# in the garden BY STEPHEN AND KRISTIN PATEGAS



## Resolve To Grow Cool Plants

By Stephen and Kristin Pategas

If you are tired of the boring plants everyone has in their garden, resolve to add at least a few interesting ones to your garden over the next year.



A cool plant is one that can't be found at 7-Eleven. People can't help but reach out to stroke it. It's a plant that inspires jealousy and possessiveness. Whether they go straight into the ground or hang out in a container where you can really highlight them they are sure to attract attention. We trial new plants each year in our gardens and the cool ones have generated multiple oohs and ahhs. If the plant performs well and becomes readily available we often specify them in our designs. Here is a selection of cool ones that consistently generate interest and may have a place in your dreams and garden:

**Dyckia 'Nickel Silver'**  
The orange spike contrasts with the silver foliage.

**Muhlenbergia dumosa:**  
Soft fine foliage dances in the breeze.

Kristin and Stephen Pategas design landscapes and garden at their home and business Hortus Oasis in Winter Park. Contact them at [garden@hortusoasis.com](mailto:garden@hortusoasis.com) or visit [www.hortusoasis.com](http://www.hortusoasis.com) and [www.pategaionplants.com](http://www.pategaionplants.com).

All photography by Stephen G. Pategas/Hortus Oasis



■ **Agave bracteosa/Squid agave** - Yup, looks like a sea creature and gets a flower spike 4-7' tall. Ours hasn't flowered yet but we can't wait.

■ **Aloe x humilis 'Hedgehog'/Hedgehog aloe** - This ground hugger may reach anywhere from 6 to 20" in height with coral red flower spikes.

■ **Aloysia virgata/Almond bush** - White blooms almost year round are very fragrant. We keep ours in a container that dwarfs it (8-15' x 10' wide in the ground) and puts the fragrance where we pass by frequently. Yum. (Shown above right.)

■ **Chamaerops humilis var. cerifera/Silver European fan palm** - Instead of green fronds they are silver and look great with our Mediterranean style house.

■ **Curculigo capitulata/Palm grass** - A tropical looking grass-like perennial with 5 foot long pleated blades that need shade.

■ **Dyckia 'Nickel Silver'** - This soil-loving bromeliad native to South America is very low water use and super spiny with a fantastic bloom spike. (Shown at left.)

■ **Ilex vomitoria 'Will Fleming'/Will Fleming holly** - This cultivar of our native yaupon holly reaches 10' to 15' tall and less than 2' wide. They are all males so don't expect the red berries on this sentinel.

■ **Jasminum laurifolium (formerly nitidum)/Shining jasmine** - Fragrant white blossoms with pink buds clothe this vine or sprawling shrub to about 5' tall.



**Aloysia virgata**

■ **Justicia spicigera/Orange plume** - This large-leaved shrub reaches about 6' height with orange blooms from spring through summer.

■ **Muhlenbergia dumosa/Bamboo muhly** - Find the finest of textures in this bamboo-like grass that grows about six feet overall in a clump. (Photo below.)

For a selection of out of the ordinary plants (including many of these) check out the Florida Garden Select program <http://www.fngla.org/community-programs/florida-garden-select/>. As judges we helped select them over the last eleven years. In our search for cool plants we visit nurseries and look in every nook and cranny. Then we research its habit and the conditions it needs to grow in. We've probably killed about a third of the 600 or so plants we have trialed. Pushing the envelope is what it's all about. What's our resolution for the New Year? Find more cool plants! 🌿

Please join us February 17th at Harry P. Leu Gardens for **Contain It! Color and Drama in Container Gardening** program. Registration required 407-246-2620.