

in the garden *by Stephen and Kristin Pategas*



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Tweak It - Getting Ready For The Garden Party

The date and menu are set. The guest list is finalized and invitations are due to go out. But as the day of reckoning approaches is the garden ready to be seen by the guests? In the bustle of dealing with garden party arrangements don't forget the venue – your garden.

Establish the time of day and/or night the garden will be viewed. If the guests won't arrive until after dark the upgrades and maintenance can be confined to the areas illuminated by the landscape lights. If you don't provide flashlights the guests will never know that you stashed the wheelbarrow in the corner or the garden path isn't weeded beyond the pool of light. If you expect to add additional lighting (highly recommended), then run a test well in advance so you know what will be visible and so there is enough time to revamp the areas.

Determine from what locations the garden will be viewed. Focus on the up close areas where the details are more visible. Then take a stroll and make a list of what needs attention in order of priority and by when. If you use a landscape maintenance professional and they can handle the tasks, share the list and set up a schedule to get the tasks accomplished.

Tasks may include:

- Clean walkways, decks, and patios with a pressure washer.
- Fertilize to green up plants if done a month in advance. Liquid fertilizer shows results in days.
- Trim shrubs, remove low hanging branches and trim out dead branches.
- Replace dead or dying plants.
- Add plants with fragrant blooms.
- Remove weeds and add mulch to a two to three inch depth (no bare soil, please).
- Clean up plants with dead or yellow foliage or spent seed stalks that persist (African iris, Flax lily, Lily of the Nile)
- Freshen up containers with blooming plants and strategically place them.

For an evening into night event review the lighting and adjust as needed. Consider adding temporary lights to create a Tivoli Gardens evening. Place luminaries at a variety of heights and at distances that allow the pools of light to blend together and eliminate dark areas. To increase safety, cluster them at steps and any elevation changes or uneven surfaces.

Just as indoor events inspire the completion of an overdue chore like painting or hanging a piece of artwork, a garden party motivates to accomplish garden upgrades. For a book signing event this past spring we installed (with professional assistance) a brick patio, water feature surround, and a stone carved wall panel on a pedestal flanked by trellises. Our visitors were thrilled with the garden and now we get to enjoy the upgrades every day. Once the garden is tweaked for entertainment, keep it that way. Then you can throw a party on a whim. ■



Put out cushions and impromptu entertaining is a snap.



Garden construction in progress at Hortus Oasis.



Our project completed and ready for the party.

All photography by Stephen G. Pategas/Hortus Oasis