

the TROPICAL GARDEN

FALL 2013

Fall Colors in the Tropics



PUBLISHED BY FAIRCHILD TROPICAL BOTANIC GARDEN

CONTRIBUTORS



GEORGIA TASKER was the garden writer for *The Miami Herald* for more than 30 years, and now writes and blogs for Fairchild. She has received the Garden's highest honor, the Barbour Medal, and a lifetime achievement award from the Tropical Audubon Society. She is also an avid photographer, gardener and traveler. She graduated cum laude from Hanover College in Hanover, Indiana.



KENNETH SETZER joined Fairchild as a writer and editor with the marketing team in 2013. He contributes to print and digital media. Setzer enjoys writing about natural and human history and is an enthusiastic photographer, with a particular fascination with fungi. His educational background is in linguistics, with a BA from Queens College, City University of New York, and an MA from Florida International University.



LAURA TELLEZ is Fairchild's Discovery Program coordinator, where she teaches and develops science and nature-based educational programs for students in elementary, middle and high school. She has the support of a committed group of volunteers who allow her programs to reach thousands of students every year.



BRETT JESTROW is Fairchild's herbarium curator, a position he has held since 2010. Originally from Northern California, he completed his doctorate through the joint program of Fairchild and Florida International University. Jestrow regularly holds workshops and university courses utilizing both the herbarium and the Science Village. Using anatomical and molecular methods, Jestrow seeks to understand plant diversity while actively collecting plants for both science and horticulture.

DO YOU HAVE POND PROBLEMS ? IS YOUR REAL PROBLEM YOUR POND SERVICE COMPANY?

Call Dr. Jeff Murray, Pondologist

WE DO IT RIGHT THE FIRST TIME!

305-251-POND(7663) | www.PondDoctors.NET

Licensed/Insured

POND DOCTORS LLC

Your Water Garden Professionals

Your Water Garden Professionals



Living Sculpture in Specimen Sizes

Palms, Cycads, and much more...
at
Botanics Wholesale
The Palm People
305-245-2966

Delivery and Installation Available

Richard Lyons' Nursery inc.

Rare & Unusual Tropical Trees & Plants
Flowering • Fruit • Native • Palm • Bamboo • Heliconia
Hummingbird • Bonsai & Butterfly



www.RichardLyonsNursery.com
richard@RichardLyonsNursery.com

@lycheeman1 on Twitter

Nursery: 20200 S.W. 134 Ave., Miami

Phone: 305-251-6293 • fax: 305-324-1054

Mail: 1230 N.W. 7th St • Miami, FL 33125



ON THE COVER

Beach Spider Lily loaded
with orange pollen.

Photo by Susan Ford-Collins

“All My Hurts My Garden Spade Can Heal”

By Kenneth Setzer



A trellis allows those who have difficulty bending to garden while standing.

People and gardens—we have a connection unlike any other. Gardens can be our solace and oasis from the world. We can escape into a little bit of nature in our gardens, get closer to wildlife, even grow the food we eat. They relax us while simultaneously rejuvenating us.

Several scientific studies have examined the therapeutic qualities of gardens and gardening, for both the mind and the body. Ecotherapy, for instance, is the use of contact with nature as a means to improve mental wellbeing. In 2007, British mental health organization Mind published a report called “Ecotherapy: The Green Agenda for Mental Health.” That report presents real data and case studies demonstrating the effectiveness of ecotherapy. For the body, the American Horticultural Therapy Association cites studies demonstrating improved immune

response, decreased stress, lower heart rate and improved motor skills as a result of gardening activities. Although gardening can be strenuous, when done safely it can be a good workout, burning calories and developing muscles.

But, just as our gardens grow and change through time, so do our bodies. The ability to perform common gardening activities can be impeded by arthritis, rheumatism or other joint or muscular conditions, but these needn’t stop us from gardening. In fact, a study funded by the Arthritis Foundation and published in 2007 showed that exercise can actually reverse aging in muscle cells. As a low-impact exercise that requires no gym membership or bulky equipment, gardening can be an ideal activity throughout a person’s lifetime. Of course, you should check with your doctor about staying active in your garden if you’ve experienced any health or mobility issues.

Planning for accessibility

If you don’t yet have your garden planted, plan for accessibility now and in the future—so that you’ll be able to continue to enjoy this activity throughout your lifetime. Create wide paths to accommodate a cane or walker, ensuring that you can easily access your beds for weeding and maintenance should you require either form of assistance. Be cautious of placement of mulched areas, as mulch is quite slippery when damp. Consider sand paths instead: Not many weeds like sand, and it’s fairly stable, even when wet. Lay out your garden to suit your needs and ability, with an eye towards your future requirements. If your garden is already established, you may need to consider hiring a landscaper to modify it to allow you easy and safe access.

Bring the garden to you

Patty Cassidy, a registered horticultural therapist, certified master gardener and author of *The Illustrated Practical Guide to Gardening for Seniors* and *The Age-Proof Garden*, advises that, “adding vertical structures can add a whole new dimension to your experience and to the look of your garden. Not only do they enable you to do a lot of your tending and maintenance standing up, thus putting less pressure on your back and knees, but they are also great space-savers on decks or porches.”

Vertical gardening can take many forms. “Trellis or lattice structures come in plastic, wood or metal grid design and can be attached to walls or fences or can be free-standing,” Cassidy explains. “These are popular for showcasing delicate flowering vines.” She also recommends taking advantage of arbors and archways: “Try growing cantaloupes or other small melons on these more sturdy structures.

Or try using an expandable teepee, often made from bamboo or plastic poles. This can be easily set in a raised bed to provide more height for easy access. They are perfect for pole beans and peas."

Raised garden beds can also help bring your garden within easy reach. Essentially bottomless boxes, they can be purchased as kits or made from wood (preferably naturally rot-resistant cedar), and should ideally be about two feet high, allowing access to the soil surface from a seated position. To avoid soil compaction, use coir (derived from coconuts) as a planting medium in your raised plant beds. It's also lighter than soil and helps retain moisture.

Plant smart

Keep low maintenance in mind when choosing what you want to grow. Xeriscapes (gardens using plants with low water needs) are great for the environment, and reduce or eliminate the need to haul around heavy and awkward hoses for watering. Native plants are always a great bet, because they are already completely suited for your environment. Once established, they often do not require any additional irrigation beyond what nature provides. And they, too, are great for the environment. If you must water your garden, invest in a lightweight hose and a wheeled cart that you can use to haul your watering can. Throughout your garden, use weed-blocking fabric or plant a ground cover to help block out weeds and retain moisture, thus reducing maintenance requirements. Also keep in mind that planting perennials instead of annuals should reduce your future workload.

Avoid pain with better tools

Gardening is great exercise for maintaining joint flexibility, but using some gardening tools may initially aggravate joint problems. Look for tools that are designed to go easy on your joints. Tools labeled "ergonomic" are often specially designed to be easier on your hands, and may even have been designed specifically for those with arthritis. However, Cassidy cautions, "Some designs are better than others."

Lightweight tools with long handles let you avoid having to bend or stoop. Ratcheting hand pruners are convenient for those with limited hand strength. Cassidy says

you should also look for hand cushioning. "For tools that require us to grasp, most arthritic hands require and appreciate more cushioning," she notes. "Many hand tools like trowels, weeders or pruners now come with foam rubber or some soft materials. If you need more sponginess, buy inexpensive pipe insulators that are easy to cut and wrap around handles, and secure with brightly colored duct tape."



Raised garden beds help gardeners avoid bending or sitting on the ground to tend plants.

Avoid repetitive tasks

Even with comfortable tools, it's essential to avoid extended, repetitive tasks. The Arthritis Foundation recommends switching tasks every half hour, and taking 15-minute breaks every hour, as well as using larger muscles when possible (for instance, carrying items with your shoulders instead of your hands). The foundation also publishes a list of products awarded its "Ease-of-Use Commendation"—those which the foundation has tested and believes will help people with arthritis and other physical limitations.

And finally, remember to listen to what your body is telling you: If it hurts, stop. Don't be afraid to ask for, or hire, help. Cassidy summarizes well: "Staying involved in your garden is healthy, and knowing your limits is wise."

Resources

Find more information with these resources:

"Ecotherapy: The Green Agenda for Mental Health," Mind
www.mind.org.uk/campaigns_and_issues/report_and_resources/835_ecotherapy
American Horticultural Therapy Association
www.ahta.org
The Arthritis Foundation
Arthritis.org

Patty Cassidy

www.pattycassidy.com

Arthritis Foundation Ease-of-Use products list

www.arthritis.org/resources/ease-of-use-new

Gardening tools designed with ease in mind

Radius gardening tools

www.radiusgarden.com

Fiskars

www2.fiskars.com

Garden at Ease

www.gardenateaseshops.com

Bionic Gloves (Gardening and other gloves designed for arthritis sufferers)

www.bionicrobes.com 