

home furnishings store, Phil and Regina specialize in tropical furniture they discover during frequent trips to the Caribbean and Bali. Two of their favorite clients happen to be landscape architect Stephen Pategas and landscape designer Kristin Pategas, who own Hortus Oasis garden design in Winter Park. The two couples got together to work out a landscape plan that would fit the personalities of the homeowners while solving the drainage problem. In addition to the swale, the lot also featured a heavily wooded conservation area, so the rear of the property had to remain untouched.

“They were interested in creating what they called ‘their own private paradise,’ ” Stephen recalls. “In the front, the existing vegetation of pines, oaks, and the subtropical saw palmettos was preserved and enhanced with lush plantings. We used a raised boardwalk that winds its way through the palmettos to the front deck and creates the feel of an entry into a pri-

vate nature preserve,” he explains.

Built of pressure-treated pine, the boardwalk stands about a foot above ground level to allow water to flow underneath. Stephen and Kristin designed luxuriant plantings that surround and complement the palmettos. Vines, such as Confederate jasmine (*Trachelospermum jasminoides*) and bougainvillea, mix with tropical foliage and showy blooms from Chinese fan palm, birds of paradise, hibiscus, banana plant, and bamboo. As the boardwalk weaves its way through the front yard, palmetto fronds extend their greeting and guide guests to an open deck, which acts as a landing for the covered L-shaped veranda.

Arriving at Phil

and Regina’s front door is like breaking into a clearing in a tropical rain forest. Although the house is located in a bustling neighborhood, its veranda, surrounded by lush foliage, offers a tranquil retreat. “The street is a little busy,” Regina admits, “but when we want it to be quiet, it is—like in the evenings or on Sunday mornings. I just love the soft early light here too. Really, it’s great out here any time of day.”

GLENN R. DINELLA



Crotons, bougainvillea, variegated ginger, and a ti plant provide electrified color around the home’s front entrance.