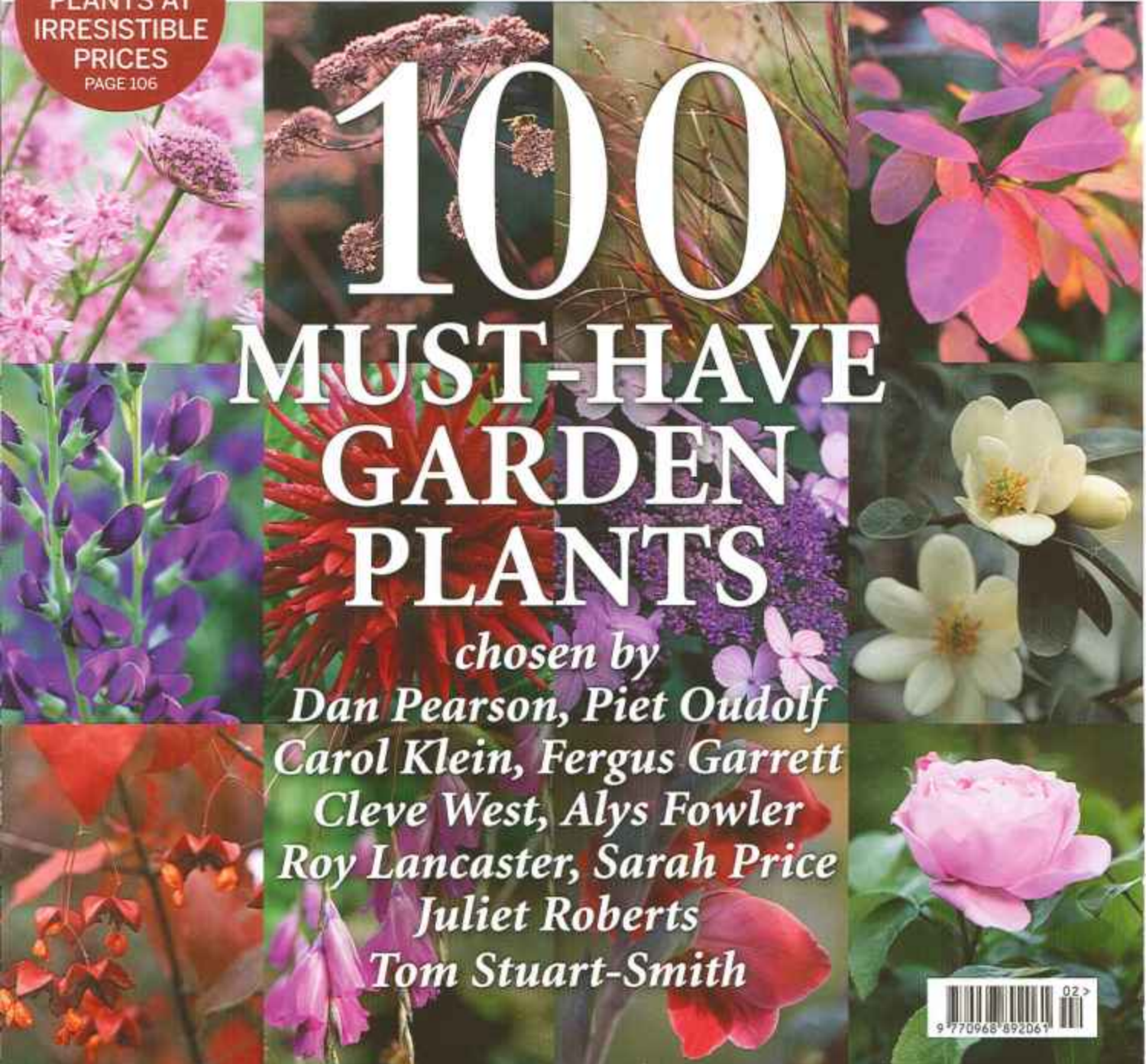


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100 MUST-HAVE GARDEN PLANTS

chosen by

Dan Pearson, Piet Oudolf

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Cleve West, Alys Fowler

Roy Lancaster, Sarah Price

Juliet Roberts

Tom Stuart-Smith



In brief

WHAT Private garden created between 1995 and 1998.


WHERE Coral Gables, Florida

SOIL Good agricultural soil – mango and avocado groves once grew here

SIZE Two acres

CONDITIONS Tropical

SPECIAL FEATURES Lush tropical planting and use of natural materials on site – limestone and water. Design by Miami-based Raymond Jungles



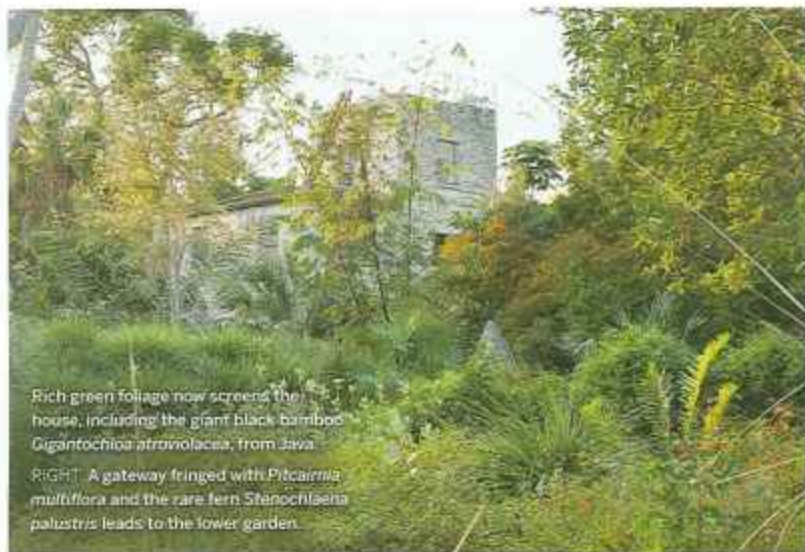
Palms fringe a placid lagoon in the Wards' garden – but this seemingly natural scene was created by earth movers extracting thousands of tonnes of limestone.



The blue lagoon

Surrounded by conventional suburban gardens, one remarkable Florida home is hidden in its own lush landscape full of exotic plants

WORDS JOANNA FORTNAM PHOTOGRAPHS MARION BRENNER & ROGER FOLEY



Rich green foliage now screens the house, including the giant black bamboo *Gigantochloa atrovirens*, from Java.

RIGHT: A gateway fringed with *Pitcairnia multiflora* and the rare fern *Stenochlaena palustris* leads to the lower garden.



Beaches and Disney World are the faces of Florida that everyone knows, but they're not the whole story. From the truly tropical Everglades in the south, to citrus plantations and pine forest in the sub-tropical centre and north, the Sunshine State is an oozing, watery, wild and prickly place. Not that this natural diversity ever shows up in local gardens. Most Floridians are incomers who prefer to surround themselves with a fantasy version of the tropics – manicured green lawns, palm trees and swirling carpets of bright busy lizzies are typical.

However, there are signs that the real Florida is slowly gaining ground. In the forefront of that shift is Miami-based landscape architect Raymond Jungles. Like almost everyone else in the state, he's not from Florida, having grown up in the midwest, but he has closely observed the state's diverse landscape over 36 years.

The garden of Anne and Jackson Ward is the culmination of Jungles' approach to landscape. The primeval ruggedness

of the towering palms, fern-lined sinkholes and rocky outcrops is an eruption of real Florida into the manicured suburbia of Coral Gables all around.

The house is set on the highest point in South Florida, a ridge of oolitic limestone that runs through Miami. Endless traffic flows past it along Old Cutler Road, a historic highway carved out by the first settlers who came to farm the rich agricultural soil and grow the crops that pre-Disney Florida was known for – citrus, mangoes, avocados.

Jungles says: "This old house was just sitting there for years. All the avocado trees got knocked down in Hurricane Andrew in 1992, it was totally exposed. Somebody bought it and put up a ficus hedge [the local equivalent of leylandii]. Then one day I got a call – the Wards had bought it and they wanted to meet me. The garden was just a sloping lawn with a basketball court and a tennis court. You could see five or six big houses all around the periphery." Cars streaming past today, however, are oblivious to the property, so

Exotic favourites

Raymond Jungles names some of the plants he most loves to use in his garden designs:



Dioon
Raymond is fond of cycads, especially diions such as the Mexican *D. spinulosum*.

Heliconia
Genus of more than 100 species, including *H. rostrata*, from Ecuador and Peru.

Kapok
Tender *Ceiba pentandra* has striking, spiky stems and fluffy seedpods.

Silver saw palmetto
Serenoa repens is native to southeastern USA; the cultivar 'Cinerea' has silver-grey leaves.

Zamias
Another favourite cycad genus. Raymond often uses the native *Z. floridana*.



Sabal palms shade the margins of the lower lagoon, which rises and falls with the tide.

RIGHT A tiny grove of palms (*Dypsis lasfeliiana*) invites visitors to explore.



Five tips for making transformations

1. **Keep the outside out** – hide the perimeters of the garden with dense vegetation so that no sense of the outside world intrudes.
2. **Dig deep and...**
3. **Build high** – changes in level may seem drastic at the time, but they pay off in transforming an unremarkable space into something unique.
4. **Find one simple idea and follow it through** – most people compromise and end up with gardens that have a bit of everything.
5. **Contrast** – do the opposite of everyone else in your neighbourhood if you want to stand out.

seamlessly does it blend into woodlands – and from inside the garden you are equally unaware of the rest of the world.

"The clients knew exactly what they wanted," says Jungles. "Especially Anne. She showed me Matheson Hammock, a nature reserve down the street, and said 'I really want it to be like this.'"

Work took four years, starting with the front garden, where the Wards wanted to create some privacy and muffle noise from the road. Early in the proceedings a pig called Virginia played a crucial part: "I had an interesting phone call from the Wards one day," says Jungles. "They had rescued a small piglet and needed to make a home for her. So I studied the wind patterns and drainage and found what I thought would be the perfect place. We dug a sloping pit for her that would drain to low ground."

Once Jungles started digging, he entered a magic realm of possibilities. "Creating the hog pen meant we determined that we could dig the stone out in big blocks, so we started adding them to the



Sword and maidenhair ferns have colonised the stone above this man-made sinkhole.



The scent of Panama rose (*Rondeletia leucophylla*) fills this secluded niche, which overlooks the sinkhole.

Ground cover of wild peanut (*Arachis glabrata*) sweeps around a spectacular *Copernicia baileyana* palm from Cuba.

RIGHT Slender dahoon holly trees (*Ilex cassine*) shade clouds of golden creeper (*Erodia littoralis*)



▷ front garden for land form. Then we decided to dig the big lagoon and use the fill for privacy along the peripheries in a series of hills.”

For a while the garden was a quarry. Huge rocks were lifted with cranes; some of the largest were excavated *in situ*, then left as outliers. Florida has a high water table, so the lagoon filled with ground water, which rises and falls with the tides. The white, exposed stone quickly weathered to green. Ferns soon sprung from the rock. But the planting is not a free-for-all: “There is colonisation, but it’s controlled,” says Jungles. “It’s what you take out that preserves the garden.”

Plant selection

The planting is mostly Florida natives, plus a collection of Caribbean palms. Cypress, pond apples and red mangrove feature in the lagoon as well as in the upper pond 1.2m above. Accent plants – including kapok, South American oil palm and Bailey palm (from Cuba, pictured above) – are distributed among native thickets. But it’s not

all dense vegetation: “There are some fairly large areas of open sky over the pond,” says Jungles, “and a lot of different trails, so that you feel like you’re taking a walk in the woods. I find it very peaceful because there are always a lot of birds and trickling water.”

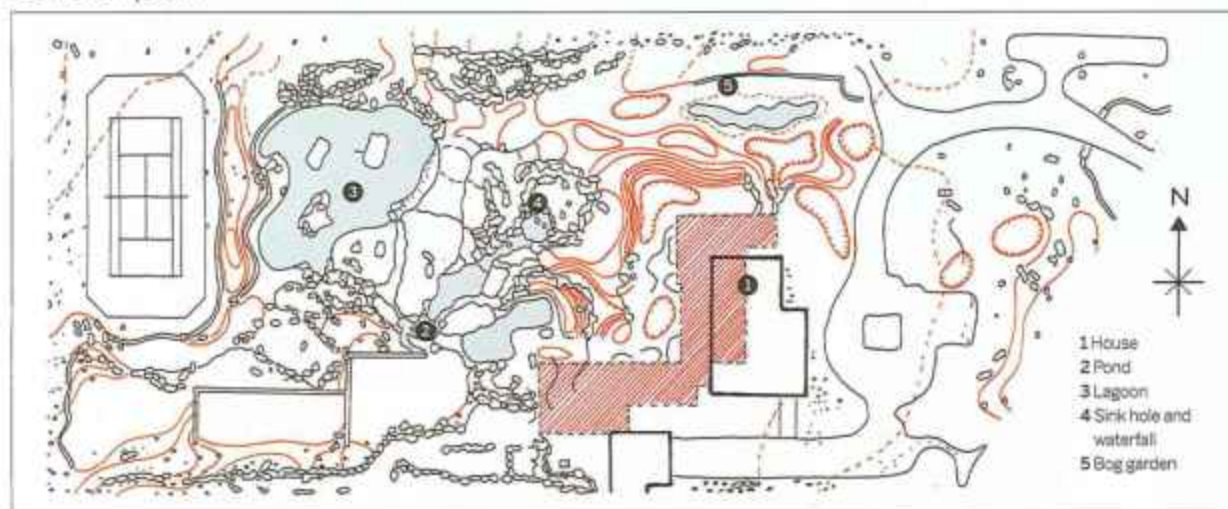
Gardeners come in a couple of days a week. Key tasks are to remove “things that have popped up where they shouldn’t,” and add fresh pine straw as a mulch. Some wildflowers, such as golden rod, seed easily but Anne Ward plants masses herself every year.

The process Jungles evolved here has influenced his work since. “It was a departure, as most of my clients want a more controlled look. This let me explore my wild side. I started working with landform in a larger way, doing sculptural things with rock and landmass.”

The irony is that his extensive interventions resulted in a garden that appears timeless and natural – and brings the Florida garden back to a distinct regional style that it had all but forgotten. □

• For our Designer profile on Raymond Jungles see issue 162.

Garden plan



“You feel like you’re taking a walk in the woods... I find it peaceful because there are always a lot of birds and trickling water.”

Unlike the lagoon, the upper pond (to the right of this picture) is above the water table, so Raymond lined it with concrete to ensure water didn't seep away.