

Landscape Engagement

RAYMOND JUNGLES CONTINUES TO LEAD THE CHARGE WHEN IT COMES TO SUMPTUOUS GARDENS COMPLETELY ATTUNED TO THEIR ENVIRONMENTS

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ABOVE: In this Miami residence, a moat defines the green plaza adjacent to the garden pavilion. A separate area was created around an existing oak tree by building an elevated wood deck a couple of steps down from the stone terrace. All the hardscape for this project was created in collaboration with CMA Design Studio. ABOVE INSET: Landscape architect Raymond Jungles

One of the country's most lauded landscape architects, Miami's Raymond Jungles has been transforming outdoor spaces throughout Florida and abroad since 1985. Along the way he's collected multiple accolades and published four monographs about his work, which he describes as "verdant spaces that entice participation and soothe the psyche." As his firm approaches its 40th anniversary, we spoke to Jungles about his inspiring trajectory, his current projects, and the ideas that keep him inspired.

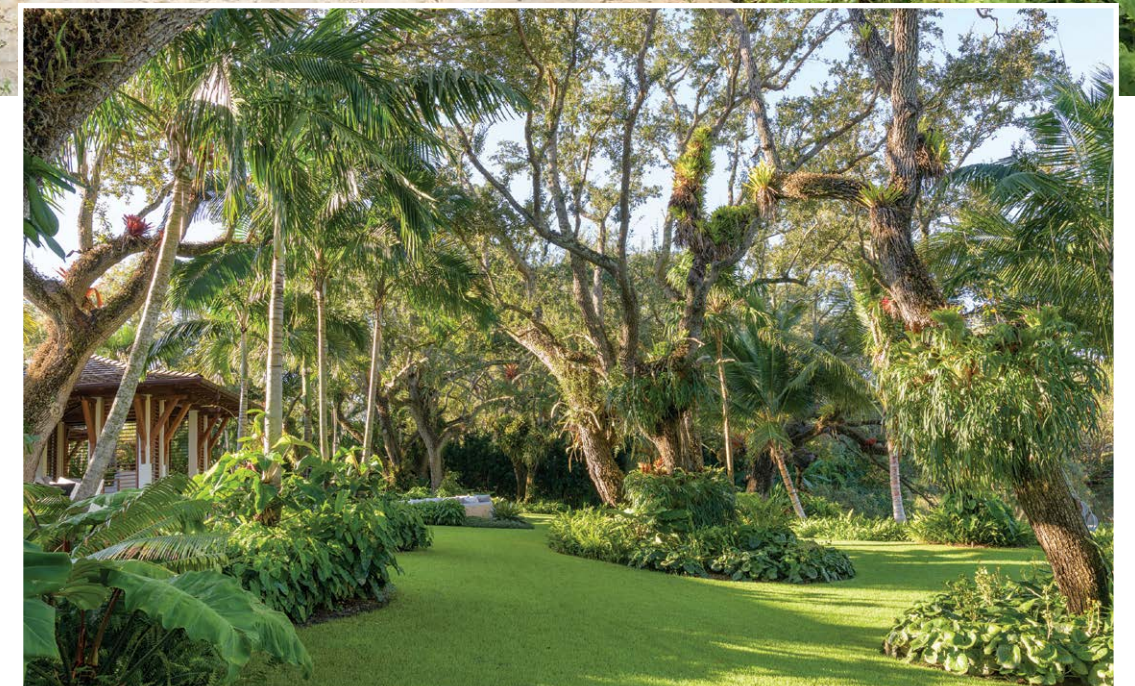
It's been a while since we've checked in with you. What's new at Raymond Jungles these days? We've been keeping rather busy. We have a lot of great new talent and we've expanded our work territory. During COVID, we started working in Costa Rica, California, and the Hamptons. And right now, we're working on Phipps Ocean Park in Palm Beach, which is an 18-acre, native-plant-only public park. Busy, indeed.

You've described your professional mission as "creating timeless designs that create places for all living organisms." Can you expand on that? We try to enhance biodiversity on any project that we do. We're creating habitat. We want to see butterflies in the air all the time. We want to see birds and squirrels in the trees. We want to see as much life as possible in our gardens because living gardens are so much more enjoyable than sterile gardens that have beautiful plants, but that don't contribute to the local ecosystem.



ABOVE: The guest house of this Miami property is adjacent to the pool in an area of the garden defined by lush plantings and stone walkways.

RIGHT: Existing oak trees were preserved or repositioned to create filtered shade in which lush understory plantings thrive.





An elevated moat defines the exterior covered dining area of this Miami Beach garden. Cascading water flows into a lower basin creating a pleasant, subtle sound that enlivens the space. Native Simpson's Stopper trees and frangipani perfume the air when in bloom. The hardscape for this project was created in collaboration with Kobi Karp Architect.



Mature coconut palms with sculptural forms shade a pocket beach and create a foreground element against the bay.

Sounds as if the firm is as committed to sustainability as it's ever been. Absolutely. We're stewards of the land and all our gardens have a sound base of native plants that belong to the region that we work in. In some instances, like the Phipps Ocean Park project in Palm Beach, we are working with ecologists to restore landscapes to what they were before human intervention.

What about the "timeless" part of your mission statement? It means that we steer away from trends. We work with principles, not formulas, and design principles don't change like fashion trends do.

On that note, trends do infiltrate garden design. What are your Florida clients asking for in terms of landscape these days? My clients want what we do, so that hasn't changed much. However, I am seeing more requests for artificial turf than I would like to see. They request it because it's more sustainable, but in my mind, it's like paving more land. I prefer to let the land breathe.

Do you have a preferred style of garden that you enjoy working on? No preferred style, but I am a bit of a modernist and I believe in less is more. Form follows function.

What do you think are the most serious challenges facing landscape architecture today? Close-minded municipalities that aren't very open to using public land to create habitat and enrich urban environments. That's one of my main frustrations these days.

And what do you see ahead for your industry? I'm going to stay positive and say that I foresee a lot more people doing gardens like the ones we do, using native plants, and I'm looking forward to seeing regulatory agencies fund their maintenance departments better so that we have more green environments in areas that have been sterilized by development.

You've been at your profession for 39 years now. How do you stay engaged and inspired? If you love what you do, it's not work. We are lucky we get to be selective. We choose what projects we do, what clients we work with, and who gets to be on our team. We have fun. raymondjungles.com

RIGHT: Floating steps between Simpson's Stopper trees connect a covered outdoor dining area with stone garden paths designed to integrate with the lawn and plantings.

FAR RIGHT: Stone paver bands link the guest house with the pool pavilion and main house terrace.

