



Sustainable
Landscape Solutions

Customer Information

TROPIC LIFE

True tropicals and tropical appearing plants have many uses in the north Florida garden. With their lushness, large leaves, colorful flowers, variegated foliage, and exotic and unusual features, they create a sense of place that feels right for this area. Even just a familiarity with a certain plant seen repeatedly in warm climates can make us think of the tropics. These plants are also compatible with pools and water features, and can provide a bridge between the spring annuals and perennials that slow or stop flowering in the heat, and the plants that won't flower until it cools in Fall. True tropicals are best in the summer when hardy plants start to decline. They take the heat and humidity, producing flowers and fresh foliage until frost.

When you design your landscape, think of many layers of dense plantings. Tropical rainforests have certain specific features. You see plants growing on top of other plants, large and long leaves often with drip tips and sometimes with variegation, smooth trunks and hot, bright colors. Tropicals can be mixed in with hardy tropical-appearing plants to echo them or provide contrast. They can also be powerful focal points. Even the smaller tropicals can be bold focal points in containers. Low growing tender plants can be mixed in borders to step in when the annuals slow down and where they won't compete with taller fall blooming perennials. Another great way to design with tropicals is to create beds in parts of your garden just for them. Instead of trying to overwinter some of your tropicals you can treat them as annuals, and change and redesign the bed each year. This method allows you to manage your plants much more efficiently since you won't have to carefully plan and garden around your perennials in those areas. The beds can support cool season annuals like pansies and spring bulbs early in the season before the tropicals are ready to be planted, and many will share the space as the bulbs and less heat resistant plants go dormant.

Tropicals aren't difficult to grow. Wait until the night temperatures stay above 50° to plant. Most prefer well-draining soil with average fertility but mulched. Some of the more hardy tropical-looking plants like cannas, ginger, bananas and elephant ears, do better in richer and moister soil. If you dispose of your tropicals at the end of the season, then you can fertilize even in late summer for a better end of season display. If kept, smaller potted plants can be brought indoors or in garages/greenhouses for overwintering or covered with freeze cloth when necessary. See the following table for growth requirements and attributes for specific plants. In the table, the minimum temperature column reveals which of these useful plants are the hardy, tropical looking ones and which will need to be protected in winter or replaced in the spring. We are part of USDA hardiness zone 9a, with an average minimum winter low of 20°, so anything with a higher minimum isn't hardy here.

-CONTINUED ON REVERSE-

Plant Name/Genus Name	Plant Type	Plant Form	Min Temp °F	Bloom Time	Moisture Needs	Exposure
Allamanda/Allamanda	Shrub/ Vine	Loose spreading	25-30°	Summer-Fall	Average	Full to Part Sun
Angel Trumpet/Brugmansia	Shrub/Tree	Broad, Open	15°	Intermittent	Aver to Moist	Full Sun to Shade
Anthurium/Anthurium	Herbaceous Perennial	Upright	30°	All Season	Aver to Moist	Part Sun to Shade
Aucuba/Aucuba	Shrub	Round	0°	Insignificant	Moist	Part Sun to Shade
Australian Tree Fern/Alsophila	Fern	Upright	30°	No Bloom	Moist	Part Sun
Bamboo/Bambusa	Giant Woody Grass	Erect, clumping	15-30°	Bloom Unlikely	Moist	Full to Part Sun
Banana/Musa, Ensete	Herbaceous Shrub	Upright	22-30°	Variable	Moist	Full Sun
Bird of Paradise-Orange/Strelitzia	Herbaceous Perennial	Upright	32°	Intermittent	Average	Full to Part Sun
Bird of Paradise-White/Strelitzia	Herbaceous Perennial	Upright	0°	Spring	Average	Full to Part Sun
Bird's Nest Fern/Asplenium	Epiphytic fern	Vase	30°	No Bloom	Moist	Shade
Bottlebrush/Callistemon	Shrub/Tree	Round/Weeping	10-25°	Spring-Summer	Average	Full Sun
Bougainvillea/Bougainvillea	Vining Shrub	As Trained	25°	Summer	Low	Full Sun
Bromeliad/(Many)	Perennial	Vase	25-30°	Usually once	Average	Part Sun to Shade
Caladium/Caladium	Deciduous bulb	Upright spreading	10°	Insignificant	Aver to Moist	Part Sun to Shade
Calla Lily/Zantedeschia	Bulb	Upright	20°	Summer	Moist	Full to Part Sun
Canna Lily/ Canna	Herbaceous Perennial	Columnar	5-10°	Early Spring-Fall	Aver to Moist	Full Sun
Cape Honeysuckle/Tecoma	Shrub	Viney spreading	20°	Summer	Low to Aver	Full to Part Sun
Cast Iron Plant/Aspidistra	Perennial	Upright spreading	0-10°	Occasional	Low to Aver	Part Sun to Shade
Celosia/Celosia	Herbaceous Perennial	Upright, mounded	30°	Summer	Average	Full Sun
Chinese Hat Plant/Holmskioidea	Shrub	Upright sprawling	30°	Spring to Fall	Aver to Moist	Full to Part Sun
Choc. Caricature/Graptophyllum	Shrub	Upright	30°	Summer	Aver to Moist	Full Sun to Shade
Coleus/Plectranthus	Herbaceous Perennial	Upright, mounded	40°	Us. Removed	Average	Full Sun to Shade
Copper Leaf/Acalypha	Shrub	Upright bushy	30°	Summer-Fall	Average	Part Sun
Cordyline/Cordyline	Shrub/Tree	Upright	20-30°	Intermittent	Aver to Moist	Full to Part Sun
Crinum Lily/Crinum	Evergreen Bulb	Upright spreading	15°	Any Time	Average	Full to Part Sun
Croton/Codiaeum	Shrub	Round	30°	Spring	Aver to Moist	Full to Part Sun
Dipladenia/Mandevilla	Vining shrub	Shrubby	30°	Summer to frost	Aver to Moist	Full to Part Sun
Elephant Ear/Alocasia	Herbaceous Perennial	Upright	15°	Intermittent	Aver to Moist	Part Sun to Shade
Elephant Ear/Colocasia	Herbaceous Perennial	Arching	10°	Intermittent	Moist to Wet	Full Sun
Flowering Maple/Abutilon	Shrub	Round	20°	Summer	Average	Full to Part Sun
Giant Leopard Plant/Farfugium	Perennial groundcover	Spreading	0°	Fall-Winter	Moist	Part Sun to Shade
Ginger/Alpinia	Herbaceous Perennial	Upright arching	25°	Intermittent	Average	Part Sun
Ginger/Hedychium	Herbaceous Perennial	Upright	10°	Summer	Moist	Part Sun
Hibiscus/Hibiscus	Shrub	Upright	20-30°	Summer-Fall	Average	Full Sun
Ixora/Ixora	Shrub	Round	25°	Summer	Aver to Moist	Full to Part Sun
Jacobinia/Justicia	Shrub	Upright	15°	Summer-Fall	Moist	Full to Part Sun
Japanese Aralia/Fatsia	Shrub	Upright round	10°	Fall	Average	Shade
Jatropha/Jatropha	Tree	Multi-trunked	25°	All Season	Average	Full to Part Sun
Joseph's Coat/Alternanthera	Herbaceous Perennial	Bushy	20°	Insignificant	Average	Full to Part Sun
Lily of the Nile/Agapanthus	Herbaceous Perennial	Fountain	10°	Summer-Fall	Average	Full to Part Sun
Lobster Claw/Heliconia	Herbaceous Perennial	Upright spreading	20-25°	All Season	Aver to Moist	Full to Part Sun
Loquat/Eriobotrya	Tree	Round to Upright	10°	Spring	Average	Full Sun
Macho Fern/Nephrolepis	Evergreen fern	Upright spreading	20°	No Bloom	Aver to Moist	Part Sun to Shade
Mahoe/Hibiscus	Shrub/Tree	Round to spreading	30°	All Season	Moist	Full Sun
Malaysian Orchid/Medinilla	Shrub-like epiphyte	Upright pendulous	30°	Intermittent	Aver to Moist	Part Sun
Mandevilla/Mandevilla	Vine	Spreading	30°	Summer-frost	Aver to Moist	Full to Part Sun
Oleander/Nerium	Shrub/Tree	Round	10-20°	Summer-Fall	Low	Full Sun
Orchid/Phalaenopsis	Epiphyte	Round	40°	Intermittent	Average	Part Sun to Shade
Palms/(Many)	Shrub/Tree	Upright spreading	15-30°	Us. Insignificant	Aver to Moist	Full Sun to Shade
Papyrus/Cyperus	Grass-like Perennial	Upright	20-30°	Insignificant	Aver to Wet	Full to Part Sun
Passion Vine/Passiflora	Vine	Dense	0-25°	Summer-Fall	Average	Full to Part Sun
Peace Lily/Spathiphyllum	Herbaceous Perennial	Upright arching	30°	All Season	Moist	Part Sun
Persian Shield/Strobilanthes	Herbaceous Perennial	Upright	15°	Winter	Average	Full to Part Sun
Philodendron/Philodendron	Shrub	Upright,Round	15-40°	Intermittent	Average	Part Sun to Shade
Plumeria/Plumeria	Shrub/Tree	Upright	25°	Summer	Low to Aver	Full to Part Sun
Rubber Plant/Ficus	Tree	Upright	30°	Insignificant	Average	Full to Part Sun
Sea Grape/Coccoloba	Shrub	Vase	30°	Intermittent	Average	Full to Part Sun
Snow Bush/Breynia	Shrub	Round to vase	25°	Insignificant	Average	Full to Part Sun
Staghorn Fern/Platynerium	Epiphytic fern	Low spreading	25°	No Bloom	Average	Part Sun
Stromanthe/Stromanthe	Perennial groundcover	clumping	25°	Early Spring	Moist	Part Sun to Shade
Swiss Cheese Plant/Monstera	Vine	Spreading	30°	Mid Summer	Average	Part Sun
Tapioca/Manihot	Shrub	Round	30°	Spring-Summer	Moist	Full to Part Sun
Tasmanian Tree Fern/Dicksonia	Fern	Spreading crown	20°	No Bloom	Moist	Part Sun to Shade
Tibouchina/Tibouchina	Shrub/Tree	Upright	20°	Summer	Average	Full to Part Sun
Trumpet Tree/Tabebuia	Tree	Round spreading	25°	Early Spring	Average	Full Sun
Yellow Mussaenda/Mussaenda	Subshrub	Rounded	25°	Early Summer	Aver to Moist	Full to Part Sun

Data are approximate since several species may be included in each entry.

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Rockaway, Inc. / 510 Shetter Ave, Jacksonville Beach, FL 32250 / 904-853-6572 / www.rockawayinc.com