



# Great Yard, No Work

The key to low maintenance is good design.

**D**ave and Judy Kurtz have what you want—a front yard that’s greener than a rain forest, neater than a sailor’s bunk, and easier to manage than a car full of nuns. How they achieved all this was simple: They started with a smart design.

The impetus for their new landscape was an addition to their home in Winter Park, Florida. They wanted an easy-care yard that would show off the house but not wear them out. For advice, they turned to Stephen and Kristin Pategas of Hortus Oasis.

### The Grass Must Go

First thing on the agenda—eliminate the lawn. Out went high-maintenance grass; in came a carpet of Asian star jasmine (*Trachelospermum asiaticum*), a drought-tolerant evergreen ground cover. “It only needs a little trimming now and then to keep it in bounds,” says Stephen, a landscape architect. “And because it shades the ground, you almost never see a weed.”

### Add Some Evergreens

Next step—more evergreen plants to define the yard and give privacy from



**top and above:** Careful planting highlighted by pots of color draws your eye to the front entry. The Asian star jasmine “lawn” needs very little maintenance.

the street and nearby neighbors. A live oak, a cardboard palm (*Zamia furfuracea*), and a sweep of ‘Evergreen Giant’ big blue liriopse bordering the Asian star jasmine help to screen the house across the street. At the left front corner of the house, a trio of cabbage palms (*Sabal palmetto*) plus an informal hedge of yellow anise (*Illicium parviflorum*) provide separation from the next-door neighbors.

### A Spot of Color

You need other colors to stand out in a sea of green. Hortus Oasis designed an area just for this at the turn in the front walk. Large containers hold a medley of eye-catching flowers and vines that can be changed seasonally.

### The Key Element

A large weeping ‘Pendula’ yaupon (*Ilex vomitoria* ‘Pendula’) grows at the head of a narrow bed beside the walk leading to the front door. “Because of its location, it’s critical to the design,” Stephen says. “Very few plants could be used in such a confined bed close to a walkway, grow tall enough to be in proportion with a two-story house, and not be so dense that they hide the architecture.”

By eliminating grass, focusing on low-maintenance evergreens, and concentrating color for maximum impact, Dave and Judy became their garden’s masters instead of its slaves. And that’s just what they wanted.

STEVE BENDER

### GROUND COVER ALTERNATIVES

Asian star jasmine isn’t winter-hardy in the Upper and Middle South. Homeowners there can substitute English ivy (*Hedera helix*), common periwinkle (*Vinca minor*), or purple-leaf winter creeper (*Euonymus fortunei* ‘Coloratus’).