



Covering The Landscape

Replanting The Past

A historical home gets a new landscape with an old look.

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An architectural treasure was nearly destroyed, until a group of concerned citizens stepped in to save it. Casa Feliz (www.casafeliz.us) was built in 1933 in Winter Park, FL, with bricks from the 1886 Orlando Armory and Spanish roof tiles more than 100 years old. It is one of the finest residential works of noted architect James Gamble Rogers II. In order to save the structure, it had to be relocated to a new site. With the move, came the need for a brand new landscape, which was recently completed, thanks to generous donations from several green industry companies.

"I watched in disbelief as volunteers took the project from rough grade to finished landscape in just a matter of a few days," says Jack Rogers, son of the building's designer and architect in charge of renovating Casa Feliz. "It was a wonderful demonstration of community service and civic pride."

Today, Casa Feliz (Spanish for "Happy Home") is no longer a private residence. Owned by the city of Winter Park and the nonprofit Friends of



Scruffy yuccas and aged amphoras tipped on their sides and spilling with succulents blend with the building's old brick.

Casa Feliz organization, it houses the Winter Park Historical Association office and is open to the public as a rental space for gatherings.

Plant Picks

To tie in with Casa Feliz's historic appearance, the new landscape required an aged look. Kristin and Stephen Pategas of Hortus Oasis donated landscape design services for the project. Their goal was not to replicate the original Casa Feliz landscape, but instead to reuse elements that worked while improving upon those that did not. For example, the original landscape included some invasive plants, such as Brazilian pepper, as well as tropical plants susceptible to Central Florida freezes. Substitutions were made when the original plants were deemed to be poor long-term performers. Another consideration in the landscape design was the switch from private, residential use to a public space.

"A plant palette was selected to



Photos by Stephen G. Pategas/Hortus Oasis

Curved trunk palms were selected to create a look of age.

provide plants compatible for public interaction," says Stephen. "We reduced the number of freeze-intolerant plants and eliminated invasives, which will help make efficient use of the landscape

maintenance budget."

The Casa Feliz landscape includes more than 50 varieties of plants — from *Agave americana* to *Zamioculcas zamiifolia*. Many of the plants (yucca, century plant, podocarpus, bamboo, Ti plant, bougainvillea, sabal palms, snake plants, etc.) included in the new landscape were commonly used in the 1930s,

The total value of the landscape — including plants, hard goods, labor, and services — is estimated at \$31,000. Of that total, approximately \$23,000 was donated.

Overcoming Challenges

Casa Feliz's new location presented some landscape-design challenges. Since the home sits next to a golf course, clumping bamboo was installed on the northwest corner of the home's lot to block errant golf balls hooked from the nearby ninth tee. In addition, giant timber bamboo — rising to a height of 60 feet — will screen a three-story school building just 90 feet from Casa Feliz.

Historic photographs show three sabal palms emerging from the home's interior courtyard. However, due to safety concerns, a decision was made not to reinstall palms in the small courtyard.

"To recreate the look, two trios of palms were installed on both sides of the house," says Stephen. "As the palms age, and their heads rise above the rooflines, the original look will be recreated."

To keep with the historic nature of the house, no architectural lighting was installed. However, landscape lighting is used throughout pedestrian areas, large trees surrounding the house are uplit, and palms and specimen plants are lit in such a way as to highlight Casa Feliz's architecture. ■

Casa Feliz Landscape Donors

The following Florida companies donated services, supplies, and/or plants to the Casa Feliz landscape project.

- Apenberry's Gardens
- Beckel Landscape Nursery
- Bolling Forest Products
- City Beautiful Landscaping Inc.
- Fafard
- Gateway Gardens
- Grandiflora
- Hortus Oasis
- John Deere Landscapes
- Jon's Nursery
- Kreoplin Irrigation
- Lake Brantley Plant Corp.
- Landscape Builders
- Metroscapes, USA
- Nature's Technology
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- Rain Bird
- Spade Irrigation Design
- Tropic Traditions