



TROPICAL

**Why I love... frangipanis.** This classic, fragrant tree is a must in a tropical garden, according to Aaron Worth of Brisbane's Utopia Landscape Design. "Frangipanis instantly conjure visions of the tropics. Their sweet fragrance, amazing diversity of flower colours, lush foliage and the bare stems of the deciduous varieties provides a wonderful architectural quality. Excellent as a feature tree, they also provide welcome shade."

Photography by Andre Martin/ACP Digital Library (frangipani). Photolibrary (Philodendron). For contact details, see page 252.

**36** For a long time many Queenslanders followed the garden trends of the southern states, planting formal gardens with clipped hedges, rambling cottage gardens or fragrant English gardens – but all that has changed, says Aaron Worth. He is thrilled to see locals embracing the wonders available on their doorstep. "People are now recognising the diversity of the tropical plant spectrum and their more appropriate place in our climate, which has led to a huge trend towards the tropical garden," he says. "With plants like heliconias, cordylines, crotons, gingers, agaves and many more, the tropical garden looks lush with colourful foliage and spectacular flowers. And, if designed correctly, it uses surprisingly little water."

**Why I love...**

**Gynea lilies.** Standing tall like an Olympic torch in full flame, *Doryanthes excelsa* is an eye-catching sculptural plant, and that's why Paul Stein loves it. "This plant is a striking addition to the landscape with its architectural foliage and stunning red flower spike. It has taken the place of New Zealand flax, which was popular until the drought passed and it then failed in a more humid environment. *Doryanthes* is drought-hardy and is adapted to coastal Queensland's humidity." It's easy to see how the Gynea lily beautifies a garden. "Its red flower spike grows to 2.4m tall and is ideal when viewed from an elevated position."

**40 JEWELS OF THE TROPICS**

If you're lucky enough to live in a zone that supports tropical plants, Aaron Worth suggests two useful additions for your garden:

- \* *Cordyline fruticosa* 'Negra' is a big, bold member of the vast cordyline family, well known for its spectacular array of foliage colours. This one boasts dark-purple foliage, almost black in shady areas, with green and gold colouring in the new leaves. Growing to approximately 2.5m in sun or shade, it's highly adaptable to many locations and uses in the garden, such as a tall background plant, cut low if required, and suitable for narrow spaces along fences or paths. It's amazingly fast to grow and can also be propagated by cuttings.
- \* *Heliconia rostrata* (fishtail heliconia) is another colourful, high-impact addition to any garden, featuring cascades of bright red and yellow flowers shaped like parrot beaks. This is also super-fast to grow and great to use for feature or screening purposes. As a bonus, the flowers last for weeks in floral arrangements.

**39** Perth's dry summers make it difficult to create tropical-style gardens but not impossible, says Janine Mendel. "If lush, green and tropical is the look you want, try frangipani, *Cycas revoluta* (sago palm), *Phoenix roebelinii* (dwarf date palm) and *Philodendron* [right]. My favourite bedding plant is *Philodendron* 'Hope'." >

**37 Private screening**

The biggest gardening issue in small lot developments is accommodating the need for privacy, says Aaron Worth. "One of the most common requests from my clients relates to privacy and how to achieve it in often quite narrow spaces," he says. An ideal screening plant for Queenslanders is *Elaeocarpus eumundii* (smooth-leaf quandong). A highly decorative native rainforest tree, it is narrow enough to suit most gardens. It's tall-growing (4-8m) and the lower foliage can be trimmed to fence height to allow room for walkways if required.

**38** To enjoy seasonal changes in subtropical areas, plant a *Brachychiton acerifolius* (flame tree), says Paul Stein. This native rainforest tree tolerates drought as well as humidity and extended wet periods. A rich display of cream flowers covers the tree in spring.

