

# In-Town Garden Ideas

Ron Melander  
Garden Service

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November 20<sup>th</sup>  
*Thursday at 9 a.m.*

Kris Bramen,  
Entomologist at  
UGA Griffin  
Campus will  
speak at the  
Bamboo Farm on  
Beneficial Insects  
and Pest  
Resistant Plants.  
The details about  
this workshop are  
still being  
worked out. Call  
Diane Houston  
@ 912-233-7919  
for more info.

## A Passion for Vines

Downtown Savannah Gardens would not be the same without vines. Vines to hide things or provide privacy, vines for seasonal color, vines to soften hard corners, vines to turn a brick wall green and leafy, and vines to climb up the vertical wall spaces in our courtyards reaching sunny spots not available in the lower levels of our gardens. One of my favorite groups of vines for their showy tropical blooms is the Passion Vines. The photo above is *Passiflora 'Incense'* which is a cultivar developed at the Sub-tropical Horticultural Research Station USDA in Miami, Florida and released to the public in 1973 (Info taken from *Passion Flowers by John Vanderplank* Published by the MIT Press in 1991). I love this plant. In our climate the color is exactly like the picture above but in cooler climates the color is darker. This particular plant has naturalized in a site near downtown where it was once planted and has 'moved around' through its underground herbaceous root system. I dug up a few this summer and passed them along to some of my clients where they have taken hold and bloomed. This plant is far superior to the varieties typically sold in big box retail outlets. In the early 90s I enjoyed *P. caerulea* with the truest blue color of any of the passion vines. This plant has a wonderful fruity fragrance and peak blooming is in March. If you are growing *P. vitifolia* which is a gorgeous crimson red passion vine, watch out because it has the unfortunate tendency in Savannah of beginning its blooming period very late in the fall and is often in peak bloom in January just in time for a frost. Be prepared to protect that plant with plastic and a 60 watt light bulb if you want to enjoy it to its fullest. In the late 90s when the drought and mild winters were prevalent I trained a *P. Quadrangularis* to cover the front porch. It survived two winters and in that final growing season before the cold got it I was rewarded with a number of showy pendant blooms. Check out the picture of this plant at my web site:

[www.ronmelander.net](http://www.ronmelander.net)



## Rooms with a View

Imagine waking up to the sounds of the Savannah River and peeking out your bedroom window to see commerce passing in the form of the huge cargo ships gliding by. This thought and many others were part of the decision to buy and renovate an old commercial building, which had at one time served as the Ships of the Sea Maritime Museum, and turn it into a residence. A fabulous spiral stair was created to connect the Factor's Walk level to the Bay Street level and up to a new circular atrium on the roof. The views up there are the best of any building fronting the river. A project that was originally to have a soft opening, a deadline appeared when it was decided to invite family and friends from near and far for a house blessing and party the following night. As is often the case, much worrying about logistics proved unnecessary as the guys from the construction crew, particularly Ricky my Rasta friend helped to make things happen. Everything was hauled up a ladder on the back of the building including five twelve foot Black Bamboo (*Phyllostachys nigra*) using a simple hemp rope and some muscle. The yellow groundcover is *Lysmachia congestifolia* and each planter is accented with red fountain grass. Wind has been a challenge especially for the bamboo but with drip irrigation everything handled the hot summer months well. These photos were taken about six weeks after the installation was completed.