

Ciscoe Morris Goes Tropical

You can't deny the energy and garden passion of Ciscoe Morris. I don't know about you but I do enjoy his show on television and always wondered if he is as vivacious in real life.

Have no doubt-he is.

In spite of his massive credentials of 20 years as a Master Gardener, best-selling author and garden television host, he remains remarkably down-to-earth (pun intended) and humble about his skills. He talked specifically about where he lives, showed his own house and garden pictures to educate his audience, talked fondly and often about Mary (his wonderful, garden-loving wife), shared his personal experience with plants, weather and what-have-you and filled his presentation with side-splitting humor.

He mentioned people stopping by his home frequently (even if they don't know who he is) to ask about a particular plant in his garden and how he uses Christmas tree lights to keep some plants alive during the winter. Other plants he places in pots and moves them into his garage under lights during the winter months. And indeed a picture of his garage shows plants overflowing with no room for parking. "My wife and I fight over the garage space," he said. "She gets half and I get half-for plants. I parked in there less than 6 months when we first moved in."

He spoke about Tropical Plants and how it is possible to grow them here in the Northwest-with joy. He spent several minutes discussing the beauty of banana trees, and how they can thrive. They may not bear fruit here but sometimes they do. And you can't beat the beauty of the leaves and the tropical feel you can emulate throughout your garden with them. Some new hardy, edible banana plants that he recommends are: Darjeeling Giant, Hellen's Hybrid, Orinocao and the Siam Ruby. "Don't plant them in the winter," he coached. "They won't make it. Plan on them growing large and know that they need a little moisture a couple of times a week."

Personally enjoying hummingbirds throughout his garden, Ciscoe (whose first name is actually James), recommended some plants to draw them and keep them year-round. They included Abutilon Nebob, Aubitilon Megapoticum, Grevillea Victoriae and Epiphyllum (orchid cactus).

Although Ciscoe presented over 100 tropical plant possibilities, some that are the most-hardy for our area included: Schefflera Taiwaniana (from the Ivy family), Eucomis (known as the "pineapple lily"), Hippeastrum (yes, the common Amaryllis you buy in the store during the holidays), Elegia Capensis and Chusquea Culeou.

And does Ciscoe make mistakes? Absolutely. On a show he once recommended breaking the roots of palm trees when root-bound but has since learned that these roots do not grow back easily. "Let them be root-bound," he said. "They like it."