

# Artist of the Month

## James "JC" Costello

### "The Plant Artist"



When JC Costello came to the Keys over 20 years ago, he didn't know what he would do for a living. He left behind a career in industrial piping design to pursue the dream of living in the Keys, and the only thing he was sure of was that there would be big changes ahead.

A native of Winter Haven, FL, JC met his wife, Sue Beal, in 1982 in Pittsburgh while he was working on the nuclear reactor at Shippingsport, PA. The couple made the move to Key Largo in 1986, aided greatly by Sue's sister and husband, Karen and Ike Beal. Ike and Karen traveled to Pennsylvania and stayed several weeks to help JC and Sue move, and when everyone arrived in Key Largo, Ike's business had been neglected for those weeks.

Ike's business was Tropical Maintenance, founded in 1978. He performed all kinds of maintenance tasks, like cleaning parking lots and changing hallway light bulbs in commercial spaces, but the mainstay of it was yard work. A

life-long gardener (introduced and guided by his mother from an early age), JC jumped in to help Ike get caught up, and his love of gardening blossomed!

In 1987, JC purchased Tropical Maintenance, and began the process of honing the client base towards high end yard maintenance and installation. The biggest part of the business was maintaining the TIB Bank branches in the Upper Keys, but he also worked on other commercial and residential properties.

JC's impact on the local landscape was immediately noticed. Suddenly, people saw shrubs trained into precise geometric shapes and complex spirals. He could make bougainvillea behave and bloom profusely while maintaining its shape. He used plants with colorful leaves like crotons and silver buttonwood to create a palette of contrasting and beautiful textures in his work. He became a master at designing outstanding, attractive landscaping that could survive the tough Keys climate with little water. His

designs have won awards.

JC's hobbies include avidly fishing for snook and tarpon in the Everglades, enjoying and playing live music (often being asked to join in with local bands on his harmonica), and fine art. His artistic nature and affinity for the outdoors is evident in all that he does.

The plants seem to speak to him, as he tends to their needs and reveals their potential. He has a deep understanding of

the natural world, and a great deal of respect for it, and yet he is able to control his plantings to fulfill his vision for each property.

Over the past 20 years, JC has transformed many of the properties seen along US 1 in the Upper Keys. His current client base includes the First State Banks, Dolphin Cove, Dolphins Plus, Snappers, Key Largo Canvas and others.

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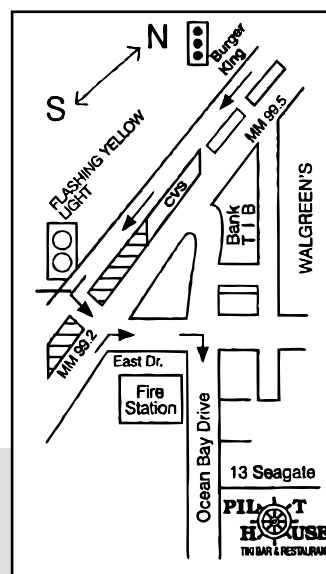
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# The Purple Isles Art Guild Congratulates Riki Pheiffer



Riki Pheiffer's was the winner of the People's Choice Award at the Birds in Nature show during the 2008 Garden Walk.

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## Entertainers of the Month

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Mandalay marina. She's originally from Chadds Ford PA, (home of the Wyeth family of painters), near Philadelphia.

In fact, Drein's great-grandmother was an impressionist painter, Maude Drein Bryant, and Drein is named for her.

The move to Key Largo was a fluke. Her mom and stepdad were on vacation, driving through the Keys. They were on their way down US 1, looking left and right down the streets to find the water, and when they turned down the first street that led to the ocean, there was the Mandalay with a For Sale sign. Just like that, they bought it, and Drein's life has never been the same.

Mike's originally from outside Chicago, but he's been down here since he was a kid,

too. His family moved to Miami in the 70's, and a few months after meeting Drein he made the move to the Keys.

The duo has just released their new CD, "Live, Loud, and Proud", recorded live at the Caribbean Club, and Drein also has a solo CD called "Prelude". Drein and Mike will begin work on a new CD early this spring and hope to have it finished in time for next season.

You can catch Drein and Mike:

Friday 7:30 - 11- Sharkey's  
Saturday 7 - 10 - Snapper's  
Sunday 5 - 8 - Snapper's

The website [www.Drein.com](http://www.Drein.com) has their calendar and other information.

Drein and Mike are also available for private parties and events. Call 305-451-9331 for booking information.

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