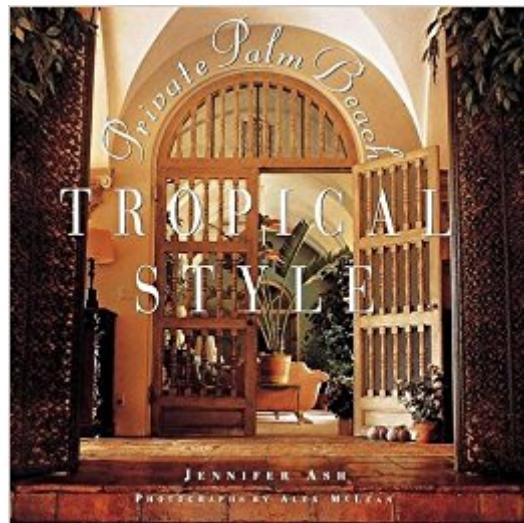


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# Tropical Style: Private Palm Beach



## Synopsis

Both old and new money flocks to Palm Beach for "the season", and the houses that line the oceanfront and Intercoastal Waterway exhibit a remarkable range of approaches to living under the subtropical sun. Among the twenty homes that are featured in this lavish volume are those of Dorothy Spreckels Munn and Lilly Pulitzer Rousseau. All the most renowned Palm Beach architects — Addison Mizner, Maurice Fatio, Howard Major, and Belford Shoumate — are represented. But author Jennifer Ash also takes us off the beaten path to fascinating residences known to natives alone: an artist's bungalow on the bohemian Root Trail, a luxuriously appointed yet fully seaworthy yacht, a cozy retreat in a landmark church. And while relating the gossip-packed history of many of the island's famous residents, she gives us a guided tour of interiors created by both local and world-renowned designers, including David Easton and Juan Pablo Molyneux. From the rococo splendor of Mar-a-Lago — designed by Joseph Urban for Marjorie Merriweather Post and now owned by Donald Trump — to the ultra-modern chic of a house by Richard Meier, Private Palm Beach affords intimate access to life behind the island's meticulously manicured hedges.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Jennifer Ash is a contributor to Town & Country, Diversion, and the Palm Beach Daily News, the town's premier society paper.

Introduction One question about Palm Beach has intrigued novelists, historians, and the media for

decades: "What lies behind the hedges?" Hedges are such a basic feature of the island's landscape that a local law regulates their trimming and protects them from destruction. If an endowment for hedges could be established, no other institution in town would be more heavily funded. This foliage fanaticism is not botanical in origin. Rather, it stems from a fierce devotion to privacy that has been passed down from generation to generation. Ever since the height of walls was restricted by the town code, hedges have been serving as live barricades protecting the super rich from public scrutiny. These leafy curtains allow them to indulge impulse more freely. The people who live behind the hedges are frequently eccentric, unfailingly philanthropic, and determined to do as they please. Their wondrous residential fantasies, inspired by the natural beauty of this subtropical barrier island only fourteen miles long and no more than half a mile wide, are testimony to what can be achieved when imagination, rather than money, is the only limitation. Lake Worth, the part of the Intracoastal Waterway that separates this island from West Palm Beach on the mainland, was named for Colonel William Jenkins Worth, who was in command of federal troops in the latter part of the Seminole Indian War. Worth was later second-in-command of U.S. forces in the Mexican War, and Fort Worth, Texas, is also named for him. Palm Beach's first nonmilitary settlers arrived in 1873, joining a Civil War draft dodger who had moved to the island in 1862. By 1877 there were nineteen families. One of the very first houses was built entirely of flotsam and jetsam washed to shore by the Atlantic Ocean. It was believed to belong to Will Lanehart, a cousin of Ben Lainhart (sic), who descendants still reside in the area. At this time Palm Beach was called the Lake Worth Cottage Colony. It was landscaped with palm trees quite by accident in 1878, when the Providencia, a small Spanish brigantine carrying a cargo of twenty thousand coconuts, was wrecked offshore. Settlers planted the coconuts, thereby giving birth to the island's tropical appeal. Around the mid-1880s Henry Morrison Flagler, a Standard Oil partner and Florida real estate developer, brought his railroads to St. Augustine, where he had built the Ponce de Leon Hotel. It marked the Florida resort frontier until Flagler visited Palm Beach and became so enchanted by it that in 1893 he erected the Royal Poinciana Hotel on the island and then extended the Florida East Coast Railroad to Lake Worth. With the Ponce de Leon Hotel, which was designed by John M. Carrere and Thomas Hastings, two young apprentices at the New York firm, McKim, Mead and White, Flagler introduced Mediterranean architecture to Florida. When Flagler moved on to Palm Beach, however, he opted for clapboard and shingle structures adapted from the seaside styles popular in Bar Harbor and Southampton, and he gave the job to another young architect, Theodore Blake. As Florida historians point out, Flagler built at his leisure in St. Augustine, whereas he was creating Palm Beach during boom times. Wooden structures, even when they rose to six stories, could be

built in a few months; stone archways and stucco walls took longer. The Royal Poinciana Hotel was painted a sunny yellow that came to be known as Flagler yellow. The furnishings were white wicker with green fabrics, a combination found in many Palm Beach houses to this day. Flagler's next project was Palm Beach's first mansion, a columned Greek Revival house called Whitehall, which he presented to his third wife, Mary Lily Kenan, as a wedding gift in 1901. Carrere & Hastings, who had by then gained a reputation as architects to the wealthy, finished the mansion, which is now a museum, for just under \$2.5 million. At the time, its immense stucco outline stood in jarring contrast to the wooden frame houses of the cottage colony. Meanwhile, in 1898 Colonel Edward Bradley opened the Beach Club, a gambling casino that was the first in the nation to allow ladies at the gaming tables. It was a sprawling wooden structure in the expedient architectural style of the day. Bradley circumvented Florida's state ban on gambling simply by not allowing any full-time state residents to become members of his club. Thousands of dollars, a few yachts, and many shares of stock changed hands nightly at the casino. It was strictly black tie after six o'clock in the evening; thus Palm Beach's penchant for formal dress was indelibly inked into the season's schedule. One afternoon, automobile magnate Walter Chrysler was playing roulette and forgot the time. Bradley asked him to go home and change into proper evening attire. Chrysler refused on the grounds that he was down \$20,000. Bradley offered to flip a coin, double or nothing. The colonel made the toss, then, without looking at the coin, put it away, saying, "You win, go home and get dressed." Bradley had instinctive style and his customers had no option but to follow his lead. Bradley endeared himself to his customers even after his death. In his will, he asked that the casino be torn down so that unscrupulous gamblers couldn't move in after him. He bequeathed the property to the town on the condition that it become a public park, and in the event that the town did not remove the buildings, the property was to be turned over to the Catholic Church. In 1895 Flagler built the Palm Beach Inn to handle the overflow from the Royal Poinciana. It opened in 1896 and proved to be so popular that it was enlarged three times by 1901, when it was renamed the Breakers. In 1903 the Breakers burned down; a new one opened its doors in 1904, but it, too, succumbed to flames in 1925. Dr. William Rand Kenan, Jr., who had taken over the Flagler System over Henry Flagler's death in 1913, built the present Breakers in 1926 in less than a year. The Royal Poinciana was eventually torn down in the early thirties.

Arrived in great shape.

I love all things Palm Beach and this book gives a lovely peek into gorgeous homes .It was exactly

what I hoped for and I love sitting down and reading it.

Great book. Great town.

Same old same old pictures you have seen a hundred times no wow factor ..... Seems dated Wish I did buy

it's wonderful to see inside the fabulous homes that ive only been able to view from the outside until now.

This is a marvelous book....but check and see if you have the original from the 90's. They have changed the title and the cover...and I ended up buying the book again, thinking I didn't have it. It's definitely worth having....but once is enough!! (The book's original title is simply "Private Palm Beach.")

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