

## Shade Gardening

Garden shade is often approached with a negative viewpoint. The gardener will ask, “What *can* I grow in my garden?”, or in frustration, complain that nothing will grow within a particular area. An alternative approach when dealing with this facet of gardening is to consider shade as an asset. It is cooling and inviting, and provides a restful retreat during the warmest times of the year.

Fortunately, there are many perennials that thrive in shade. The shaded garden, however, presents a different impression than a sunny garden. Bloom color is typically softer, more pastel than the strong color provided by full sun plants. There are many shade perennials that feature variegated and textured foliage. These accent the cooling “greenscape” of a shaded area.

Any garden area is more enjoyable if the plant selection provides interest throughout all seasons. Trees and shrubs will help create the structure or “bones” of the garden. They give definition to the space, and provide form during the winter months. Trees & shrubs gradually mature, casting shadows that alter the available light. Over time, many perennials adapt to changing light, although their growth habits may also be affected.

Remember that spring blooming bulbs, shade tolerant annuals, and even containers of plants lighten and brighten darker areas. The following plant list and solution guidelines will assist you in choosing plants so that your garden can have it “made in the shade”.

### Planning and Planting in the shade

The most challenging task of using perennials in your landscape is planning for color and interest over an extended season. Although some varieties will bloom for many weeks, most bloom for 3 to 5 weeks. Check blooming information on the enclosed lists, signage or a good perennial reference. This will help you plan for a succession of bloom. Adding other types of plant material, such as flowering trees, shrubs, bulbs and annuals will help.

For best results, be sure to amend your soil with organic matter. A combination of sphagnum peat moss, compost and aged manures works well. This will open-up heavy clay soil, making it more workable, more “root friendly” and improve drainage. If your soil is sandy, it will aid in moisture retention. We recommend amending soil whenever you lift plants for transfer from area to area or for propagation by division.

### Types of Shade

#### Type 1: Dappled and Light Shade

- \* Under deciduous trees with open habits of growth, i.e. birch, honey locust
- \* The east and west sides of a building can be a fairly bright location offering the lightest shade
- \* An east side will receive morning sun and bright indirect afternoon light
- \* A west side receives indirect morning light and hot afternoon direct sun

#### Solutions:

Consider thinning out some branches on denser trees to increase light.

Spring blooming bulbs usually receive plenty of light early in the year, and make a nice show before the trees leaf out.

Many perennials will adapt to filtered woodland light-try plants marked for part to full shade.

Perennials marked for full sun as well as part shade will grow on west and east sides of building, but their habit of growth might be looser and their bloom not as profuse.

#### Type 2: Open to Medium Shade

- \* Usually cast from building and trees combined
- \* There is good light, but no direct sunlight
- \* North sides will receive medium to bright light
- \* This degree of shade may also occur under decks and stairwells

#### Solutions:

Try plants marked part shade or full shade on the north side.

### Type 3: Dense Shade

- \* Found where very tall walls and fences block all but narrow strips of light
- \* Also common under large evergreen trees
- \* The quality of this shade is dense and dark
- \* Soils may be dry and often acid
- \* Tree roots are normally just under the soil and absorb most of the available nutrients and moisture
- \* Plant selection will be limited
- \* Consider the use of the area—if rarely viewed, stone or gravel mulch might be considered.

#### Solutions:

Improve soil by adding organic matter (sphagnum peat moss or compost) being careful not to damage tree roots.

Choose perennials tolerant of full shade and drier soils.

Fertilize with a slow release fertilizer and water regularly.

Consider covering the area with decorative stone or mulch.

Select plants made for full shade.

<u>Plant</u>	<u>Main Feature</u>	<u>Hardy to Zone</u>	<u>Bloom Time</u>	<u>Shade Type</u>	<u>Drought Tolerance</u>
Aconitum (Monkshood)	Spikes of blue or white flowers	3	variable	1,2	moderate
Aegopodium (Bishops Weed)	Dense carpet, green and white foliage	2	summer	all types	yes
Ajuga reptans (Bugleweed)	Low carpet, many forms	3	spring	all types	moderate
Alchemilla vulgaris (Lady's Mantle)	Rounded, fluted foliage, chartreuse bloom	3	summer	1,2	yes
Anemone (Windflower)	Open clusters of white to pink blooms	4-6	variable	1,2	moderate
Aquilegia (Columbine)	Spurred flowers-many forms, many colors	3	variable	1,2	moderate
Aruncus (Goat's Beard)	Silky white plumes, ferny foliage	4	summer	1,2	no
Asarum (Wild Ginger)	Shiny green foliage	2	spring	all types	moderate
Astilbe chinensis (Pumila)	Fluffy plumes, fern-like foliage	3	summer	1,2	no
Astilbe (False Spirea)	Ferny leaves, fluffy flower plumes	4	variable	1,2	no
Begonia grandis (Hardy Begonia)	Begonia foliage, pendulous flowers	6	late summer	1,2	no
Bergenia cardifolia	Evergreen foliage, pink flowers	2	spring	1,2,3	moderate
Bergenia cordifolia	Evergreen foliage, pink blooms	3	spring	all types	moderate
Brunnera macrophylla	Heart-shaped foliage, sky blue flowers	3	late spring	1,2	yes
Campanula (Bellflower)	Bell-shaped blooms-many forms, many colors	3	variable	1,2	moderate
Campanula carpatica	Low mounds, bell-shaped flowers	3	summer	1,2	moderate
Carex buchananii (Leather-leaf sedge)	Mahogany colored foliage	5	foliage	1,2	moderate
Carex Morrowi (Sedge)	Swirling variegated foliage	5	foliage		
Chasmanthium (latifolium)	Flat panicles on grassy foliage		foliage		1,2
Chelone (Turtlehead)	Tall spike with white or pink flowers	5	late summer	1,2	moderate
Chrysogonum virginianum (Gold Star)	Yellow flower, low mounds	4	summer	1,2	yes
Cimicifuga (Fairy candles)	Tall white spires	4	variable	1,2	moderate
Convallaria majalis (Lily-of-the-Valley)	White bells, fragrant	3	spring	all types	yes
Deschampsia (Tufted hairgrass)	Arching tufts, fine textured grass		mid-late summer	1,2	no
Dicentra eximia (Bleeding heart)	Fern-like foliage, pink or white flowers	2	summer	1,2	moderate
Dicentra spectabilis (Bleeding heart)	Arches of heart-shaped flowers	2	spring	1,2	no
Digitalis (Foxglove)	Spikes of tubular flowers many forms, colors	3	variable	1,2	variable
Doronicum (Leopard's Bane)	Yellow daisy	2	spring	1,2	moderate
Duchesnea indica (Mock Strawberries)	Strawberry foliage, red berry	3	spring	1,2	moderate
Epimedium (Barrenwort)	Leathery foliage, pink, red or yellow flowers	4	spring	1,2,3	yes
Euonymus fortunei (Wintercreeper)	Evergreen foliage	4		all types	yes
Galium oderatum (Sweet Woodruff)	Cartwheel leaves, white flowers	4	spring	1,2	no
Geranium (Hardy Geranium)	Many forms	4-6		1,2	moderate
Hakonechloa	Arching variegated leaves	5	foliage	1,2	no
Hardy Ferns	Many types and forms	variable	foliage	variable	variable
Hedera helix (English Ivy)	Evergreen leaves	3	foliage	all types	moderate
Helleborus (lenten or Christmas rose)	Evergreen foliage, early bloom	spring		1,2	moderate
Heuchera (Coral Bells)	Many forms, colors	variable	variable	1,2	moderate
Heucherella	Veined foliage, sprays of pink flowers		summer	1,2	moderate
Hosta	Stately foliage, lily-like flowers	3	late summer	1,2,3	moderate
Hypericum (St John's Wort)	Med. green, yellow starry flowers	5	summer	1,2	no

Lamium	Variegated foliage, yellow flowers	3	summer	all types	yes
Ligularia (Ragwort)	Large leaves, spikes or daisy yellow flowers	4	variable	1,2	no
Liriope (Lily Turf)	Grassy foliage-purple spike	6	summer	1,2,3	moderate
Liriope	Grass-like clumps, purple spikes	5	summer	all types	moderate
Lobelia (Cardinal Flower)	Spikes of red, blue, pink	variable	summer	1,2	no
Lysimachia (Moneywort)	Creeping mat, yellow flowers	3	summer	1,2	moderate
Mahonia repens	Evergreen foliage, yellow flowers	4	summer	all types	yes
Mertensia virginiana (Virginia Bluebells)	Drooping bell-shaped, blue flowers	3	spring	1,2,3	moderate
Mimulus (Monkey Flower)	Bright colors-tubular flowers	6	variable	1,2	no
Myosotis (Forget-me-not)	Light pink or light blue, reseeds freely	4	summer	1,2	no
Pachysandra terminalis	Shiny green leaves	4	foliage	all types	no
Phlox divaricata (Wood's Phlox)	Blue-white flowers	4		spring	1,2
Phlox stolonifera	Creeping mat, white, pink, blue	4	spring	1,2	moderate
Polemonium (Jacob's Ladder)	Blue or white clusters of bloom	3		spring	1,2
Polygonatum (Soloman's Seal)	Arching stems, white flowers	4		spring	1,2,3
Primula (Primrose)	Many forms, varieties, colors	variable	variable	1,2	variable
Pulmonaria (Lungwort)	White, Blue to pink flowers, mottled foliage	4	spring	1,2,3	moderate
Rodgersia	Palmate foliage	5	summer	1,2	no
Sagina subulata (Irish Moss)	Creeping mat of mossy foliage	4	summer	1,2	moderate
Thalictrum (Meadow Rue)	Columbine-like foliage, pink flowers	variable	variable	1,2	no
Tiarella (Foam flower)	Veined foliage, creamy spikes	4	summer	1,2	moderate
Tradescantia (Spiderwort)	Strap-like foliage, many colors	4	summer	1,2	moderate
Trollius (Globe Flower)	Yellow or orange buttercup flowers	3	variable	1,2	no
Vinca Minor (Periwinkle/Myrtle)	Evergreen, blue flowers	4	spring	all types	moderate
Viola	Many forms, many colors	3	spring-summer	1,2	moderate