

Gardening in the Shade

Consider shade an asset to your garden! It is a new area to explore and experiment with new site challenges such as varying light levels, low soil pH, and finding the best plants to flourish in these shady conditions. Here are some important points to remember when establishing a shade garden:

- Analyze and map out your areas of shade. Label them as type 1, 2 or 3 as below.
- Test your soil pH. It should range from 5.5 to 7 being slightly acidic to neutral. Many shade plants grow well in slightly acidic soil conditions.
- Most shade plants will tolerate morning sun (eastern exposure), but will burn or become stressed and die in more intense sun exposures from the west and south.
- Sun loving plants will generally tolerate morning shade; if they are exposed to too much shade they will not bloom properly, may lose leaf color/variegation, become leggy or die.
- Shade plants require proper soil preparation too. Well-drained, amended soil is best incorporating several inches of organic matter, peat or Petitti Planting Mix.
- Fertilize frequently and water deeply because new shade plants have to compete with established tree and shrub roots for nutrients and moisture.
- Maximize air circulation with careful spacing to prevent fungal disease.
- If shade is too dense 'limb-up' or selectively thin surrounding trees and shrubs.
- For best shade garden interest use unusual foliage colors and textures. Plant annuals and bulbs in large drifts or pools for high impact and color.

Degrees of Shade

Shade #1 -- Light Shade

4-6 hours of sunlight. Some like to call this dappled or intermittent because it travels as a moving pattern of sunlight and shade across the ground and plants. Open, sparsely branched trees, such as birch, or arbors cast this type of shade. Any direct sun is for a minimal period of time. Many shade and sun-loving plants do well here. You have a wide range of planting options.

Shade #2 – Medium Shade

4 hours or less of sunlight is considered medium shade. An open northern exposure or under a dense canopy of trees with reflected light from surrounding surfaces is medium shade. Shade tolerant plants and woodland natives do best in this type of shade condition.

Shade #3 -- Full Shade

This is the deepest type of shade with no direct sun. Tall walls, fences, decks and evergreens block most direct light. There will be some reflected, indirect light. Foliage plants will grow, perhaps fade in color or become leggy, but they will survive. Flowering is limited. If the area is rarely viewed, consider incorporating moss, stones and gravel as landscape solutions.



Perennials for Shade

Aconitum (Monkshood) 1,2
Alchemilla (Lady's Mantle) 1,2
Anemone (Windflower) 1
Aquilegia (Columbine) 1-3
Aruncus (Goat's Beard) 1-3
Astilbe 1,2
Astrantia 1
Belamcanda 1
Bergenia 1,2
Brunnera (Chinese Forget-Me-Not) 1-3
Calamagrostis (Feather Reed Grass) 1
Campanula 1,2
Carex (Sedge) 1-3
Chelone (Turtlehead) 1-3
Cimicifuga 1-3
Corydalis 1,2
Dicentra (Bleeding Heart) 1-3
Digitalis (Foxglove) 1
Doronicum (Leopard's Bane) 1
Epimedium (Barrenwort) 1-3
Eupatorium (Joe Pye Weed) 1
Fern 1-3
Filipendula (Queen of the Prairie) 1
Geranium 1,2
Helleborus (Lenten Rose) 1, 2
Hemerocallis (Daylily) 1
Heuchera/Heucherella 1-3
Hosta 1-3
Iris (Some species) 1
Ligularia 1,2
Lilium 1
Liriope (Lilyturf) 1,2
Lobelia (Cardinal Flower) 1
Miscanthus 1
Monarda 1
Myosotis (Forget-Me-Not) 1,2
Paeonia 1
Polemonium 1,2
Polygonatum 1-3
Primula 1,2
Pulmonaria 1-3
Thalictrum 1,2
Tiarella (Foam Flower) 1-3
Tradescantia (Spiderwort) 1,2
Trillium 1-3
Tricyrtis (Toad Lily) 1,2
Trollius (Globe Flower) 1,2

Small Trees for Shade

Acer palmatum (Japanese Maple) 1,2
Amelanchier (Serviceberry) 1-3
Cercis (Redbud) 1-3
Chionanthus (Fringe Tree) 1-3
Cornus (Dogwood) 1-3
Corylus (Filbert) 1,2
Magnolia 1

Annuals for Shade

Ageratum 1
Alocasia (Elephant's Ear) 1,2
Alyssum 1
Antirrhinum (Snapdragon) 1
Begonia 1,2
Browallia 1,2
Caladium 1-3
Campanula 1,2
Coleus 1-3
Cuphea 1
Cyclamen 1-3
Dichondra 1,2
Exacum 1,2
Fuchsia 1,2
Hedera (Ivy) 1-3
Helichrysum (Licorice Vine) 1
Heliotrope 1
Hypoestes 1-3
Impatiens/New Guinea 1,2
Ipomoea (Sweet Potato Vine) 1,2
Lamium 1-3
Lobelia 1
Lysmachia 1,2
Myosotis 1,2
Nasturtium 1
Nemesia 1
Nicotiana 1,2
Oxalis 1,2
Pansy 1,2
Phlox 1
Plectranthus (Swedish Ivy) 1-3
Streptocarpella 1,2
Torenia 1,2
Viola 1,2

Flowering Shade Shrubs

Aronia (Chokeberry) 1-3
Azalea 1,2
Clethra (Summersweet) 1-3
Cornus (Red Twig Dogwood) 1,2
Daphne 1,2
Forsythia 1,2
Fothergilla 1,2
Hamamelis 1-3
Hydrangea 1,2
Itea 1-3
Kalmia (Mountain Laurel) 1-3
Kerria 1,2
Leucothoe 1-3
Pieris 1-3
Rhododendron 1,2
Rhus 1
Viburnum 1,2

Foliage Shade Shrubs

Berberis 1,2
Buxus 1
Euonymus 1-3
Ilex 1,2
Ligustrum (Privet) 1-3
Microbiota (Siberian Cypress) 1-3
Myrica 1,2
Rhamnus (Buckthorn) 1-3
Taxus (Yew) 1-3
Thuja (Arborvitae) 1-3
Tsuga (Hemlock) 1-3
Vaccinium 1,2

Groundcovers for Shade

Aegopodium (Bishop's Weed) 1-3
Ajuga 1-3
Asarum (Ginger) 1,2
Bergenia 1,2
Campanula 1,2
Carex (Sedge) 1-3
Ceratostigma (Plumbago) 1,2
Convallaria (Lily of the Valley) 1-3
Cotula 1,2
Epimedium 1-3
Galium (Sweet Woodruff) 1,2
Glechoma 1-3
Hedera (Ivy) 1-3
Houttuynia (Chameleon Plant) 1-3
Hypericum (St. John's Wort) 1,2
Lamium/Lamiastrum 1-3
Laurentia (Blue Star Creeper) 1,2
Liriope 1,2
Mazus 1,2
Pachysandra 1-3
Pulmonaria (Lungwort) 1-3
Sagina (Irish Moss) 1,2
Thymus 1
Trifolium 1,2
Vinca 1-3
Viola 1,2

Vines for Shade

Actinidia (Kiwi Vine) 1
Ampelopsis (Porcelainberry) 1,2
Campsis (Trumpet Vine) 1
Hedera (Ivy) 1-3
Hydrangea petiolaris (Climbing Hydrangea) 1-3
Lonicera (Honeysuckle) 1
Parthenocissus (Boston Ivy) 1,2
Schizophragma (Japanese Hydrangea) 1,2
Polygonum (Silver Lace Vine) 1,2



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