

Many plants thrive in the shade



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Excessive amounts of shade can be a challenge for growing plants in the home landscape. Just as moisture, temperature, and soil conditions are often limiting factors in plant growth, the amount of sunlight a site receives is also a factor. Not all shade is the same. The amount of shade varies with the time of the day and from year to year as trees grow. The good news is that many garden plants do well in shady locations and some actually need to be out of the full sun. If you are struggling to get a lawn to grow under a grove of trees, consider a different approach by adding variety and class to your yard with shade loving plants.



*Big leaf hydrangeas thrive in shady areas and add color to the summer landscape
(Photograph by Timothy Daly)*

The challenge is to figure out which plants are most likely to succeed growing in the shade. Then provide them the type of care they need. First, determine how much light the plants will receive. Deeply shaded areas under large trees or the overhang of a building present more of a challenge than areas with partial or filtered shade. Most shade-tolerant plants need well-drained, fertile soil. Incorporate organic matter such as peat moss or compost into sandy soils and heavy clay soils.

What type of plants do the best in a shady situation? Camellias, azaleas, and hydrangeas prefer shade since the full sun will cause leaf scorch and lead to a variety of other maladies. Annuals, impatiens, coleus, wax begonias, dwarf salvias, and other shade tolerant annuals can be planted after the frost danger has passed. Hosta, lilies, astilbe, columbines, bleeding hearts, and Huecheras (coral bells) thrive in filtered shade. Many shade loving perennials are woodland plants that usually blossom very early in the season. Trillium, foam flower, Solomon's seal, and wild violets are examples of woodland plants. Ferns prosper in shade provided they have the necessary amounts of organic matter in the soil and adequate water.

Often we receive questions about turf grasses in shady areas. There are not many solutions to growing turf in the shade. Fescue, zosiagrass and St. Augustinegrass can grow in filtered shade, but will deteriorate in deep shade. The area must receive at least six to eight hours of sunlight per day. Other alternatives exist. Consider planting a shade loving perennial ground cover such as English ivy, ajuga, lirioppe, vinca, and Japanese pachysandra.