

Selecting appropriate plants for site conditions



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As homeowners, we want plants that will thrive in our landscapes. What can you do to ensure that the plants in your yard will be healthy and attractive? One of the most important considerations is making sure they are able to tolerate the conditions where they will be planted. A majority of gardening issues result from a plant's inability to tolerate or adapt to the growing conditions at a planting site.

Sunlight requirements vary among plants. Junipers thrive in full sun. If planted in shady locations, they will begin to decline. On the other hand, azaleas, dogwoods, and aucubas prefer shadier sites. If planted in the full sun, the leaves will begin to turn yellow and the plants may suffer from heat-related problems such as leaf scorch and branch dieback.



Azaleas require partial shade

Take drainage into account as well. If the soil stays waterlogged, it will need to be modified by adding organic soil amendments, re-grading the site, or installing raised beds. Another option is using plants such as river birches, swamp hibiscus, and yaupon hollies that are better adapted to wet areas.

When selecting plants, consider how large they will be in five to 10 years. The plant material should fill the space where they are to be planted and not outgrow it.

Select trees that produce minimal litter. Certain trees, such as magnolias and river birches, have a tendency to continuously drop their leaves. Make sure they are planted in an area where the leaf litter will not create a problem over your sundeck or by the swimming pool.

Some plants can spread extensively and can be invasive such as English ivy. If you plant English ivy, be prepared to continually cut it back or it will take over everything. This is also true with invasive plant material such as groundcovers like vinca and the chameleon plant.

One other important factor to consider – does the plant have excessive pest problems? Certain types of euonymus are troubled by scale insects and powdery mildew. Red tip photinias are afflicted with leaf spot disease. Cotoneasters are plagued with lacebugs. Over time, these plants will decline and will eventually perish unless they are treated on a continual basis with pesticides.

In choosing landscape plants for your yard, take these factors into consideration to avoid problems. A healthy, attractive landscape with plants adapted to their environments will require minimal maintenance and be less problematic.