

SPIRIT OF GARDENING

Shade Tolerant Plants

SHADE TOLERANT PLANTS

When choosing plants, the level of light the plant will receive should be taken into consideration. To properly select plants suitable to your site, defining the level of shade or sun the plant will receive is helpful.

The most important factor in determining shade levels is to gauge the amount of available light. The amount of available light will vary from morning to dusk, day to day and from week to week throughout the growing season. It is always advisable to observe how much available light an area gets, so one can choose plants that will successfully grow and thrive.

Shade plants usually have darker leaves than sun loving plants. This makes their leaves more sensitive to light and more adaptable to low-light situations. Due to this light sensitivity however, the leaves may bleach, yellow, scorch at the edges or develop burn spots if light levels become too intense.

ALTERNATING SHADE

This occurs when light levels shift from sun to shade or vice versa, depending upon the time of day. The important thing to note in areas like this is when sun and shade respectively are most dominant. Some plants prefer morning sun, but need to have afternoon shade.

MEDIUM SHADE

Medium shade occurs when an open shade area is further obscured by trees. This can also be a very challenging area for growing plants.

PARTIAL SHADE

This is produced by trees and creates a moving pattern of sunlight and shade. Simply put, it is the drifting pattern of light and shadow under trees. This type of shade lets in the greatest range of light and allows for the widest range of plant selection. Dappled / partial shade will support both shade-loving and sun-loving plants.

DRY SHADE

Dry shade occurs because most mature trees rob the soil of nutrients and water leaving little moisture for other plants in the area.

DENSE SHADE

Dense shade is characterized by an almost complete lack of available light. This can be found where tall walls, fences, buildings or trees block all but narrow strips of light.

OPEN SHADE

This shade is created from shadows by structures (adjoining walls, fences or building eaves and bay windows). The distance the shade is cast will vary depending on the time of year. This can be a very challenging area for growing plants, as the hot afternoon and evening sun in the mid-summer may burn the leaves of some plants.

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FERNS

Ferns are a large group of plants that are valued for their foliage. They add long-season interest and are rarely troubled by pests or diseases. Ferns prefer a rich, moist, well-drained soil that has high organic matter content. It is advisable to mulch ferns annually with a 2-3" layer of compost or leaf litter. This helps to improve soil, keep roots cool and helps retain needed moisture.

Ferns are shallow rooted, so be very careful when digging around them. Make sure that the crown of the plant is flush with the soil level - planting with the crown too high makes it vulnerable to freezing and drought which can lead to a decline in the plant's health. Ferns can be divided in the spring, as new growth starts to emerge. If you notice the center of the clump of ferns is dead, it may be a good idea to divide the clump to rejuvenate the plant.

Shade Tolerant		Perennials				
Astilbe	Beard-tongue	Beebalm	Hosta	Jacob's Ladder	Japanese Spurge	Shooting Star
Bellflower	Bergenia	Bishop's Hat	Kinnikinnick	Lady's Mantle	Lamium	Solomon's Seal
Bleeding Heart	Bugbane	Bugleweed	Ligularia	Lily-of-the-valley	Loosestrife	Toad Lily
Bugloss (Brunnera)	Bunchberry	Columbine	Lungwort	Masterwort	Meadow-rue	Japanese Beech Fern
Comfrey	Coral-bells	Cranesbill Geranium	Meadowsweet	Monkshood	Obedient Plant	Ostrich Fern
Creeping Charlie	Creeping Jenny	Daylily	Pasque-flower	Periwinkle	Plume Poppy	Golden-Scaled Male Fern
Ferns	Fleeceflower	Foamflower	Primrose	Rayflower	Rodgersia	Lady Fern
Foamy-bells	Forget-me-not	Foxglove	Yellow Archangel	Siberian Iris	Snow-on-the-mountain	Wintergreen
Fumitory	Gentian	Globeflower	Sensitive Fern	Sweet William	Sweet Woodruff	Cinnamon Fern
Goat's Beard	Hellebore	Himalayan Poppy	Toothed Wood Fern	Violet	Waxbells	Shield Fern
Windflower	Royal Fern	Oak Fern	Crested Lady Fern	Braun's Holly Fern	Christmas Fern	Japanese Painted Fern
Eared Lady Fern	Slender Male Fern	Deer Fern	Hart's-tongue Fern	Burgundy Lace Japanese Painted Fern	Robust Male Fern	Maiden Hair Fern