

## Perennials for the Shade

Shade can either be perceived as a limitation that keeps you from growing some of the plants you really want or as a wonderful opportunity. There are so many great plants that thrive in the shade that the choices can be overwhelming. Gardening in the shade can be cool and peaceful, inviting you into all the little nooks and crannies of your yard.

It is important to determine what kind of shade exists in your landscape. Light shade is still fairly bright, with the sun coming through open trees or with the shade in the afternoon from a building or fence. If an area hardly gets any direct sun but is brightly lit, it is considered medium shade. A heavy shade area receives little or no direct sunlight and is darkened by trees and structures. If possible, check the area at several different times of day over several weeks to see how much light it actually is getting. You may be surprised to find an area you thought was heavy shade has a pocket of sun strike it for a few hours at midday when the sun is high. Or you may find that surrounding trees have grown and branched so that an area you thought of as light shade is now medium or heavy shade.

The following lists cover most of the perennials that are hardy for our area. Plants on the light shade list will usually tolerate full sun also, especially if they stay well watered and mulched (to cool the soil). Those on the medium shade list can be expected to perform well in medium shade and light shade. They will survive heavy shade, but won't look their best or bloom as well. Plants on the heavy shade list can be used in light or medium shade too.

The lists are not absolutes. There are many plants, mostly endangered woodland perennials that will take even heavier shade if that shade is created by deciduous trees. They emerge very early in spring while the trees are still bare and start to go dormant as the shade develops. Some of the plants that normally do their best in full sun will tolerate a little shade, but they may not bloom quite as well or be as vigorous. Examples that fall into this grouping are veronicas and salvias.

Don't forget, this list deals only with *perennials* for the shade. You still have the option of adding some trees, shrubs and lots of annuals to your shade garden!

### Perennials for the Light Shade

- Monkshood *Aconitum*
- Sweet Flag *Acorus*
- Baneberry *Actaea*
- Lady's Mantle *Alchemilla*
- Fall-Blooming Anemone  
*Anemone*
- Astilbe *Astilbe*
- Wild Indigo *Baptisia*
- Bellflower *Campanula*
- Gas Plant *Dictamnus*
- Barrenwort *Epimedium*
- Meadowsweet *Filipendula*
- Wild Geranium *Geranium*
- Lenten Rose *Helleborus*
- Daylilies (some)  
*Hemerocallis*
- Coral Bells *Heuchera*
- Bee Balm *Monarda*
- Cardinal Flower *Lobelia*
- Sweet Cicely *Myrrhis*
- Woodland Phlox *Phlox  
divaricata*
- Obedient Plant *Physostegia*
- Balloon Flower *Platycodon*
- Jacob's Ladder  
*Polemonium*
- Sagina *Sagina*

## Medium or Light Shade

- Columbine *Aquilegia*
- Goatsbeard *Aruncus*
- Bergenia *Berginia*
- Bugloss *Brunnera*
- Marsh Marigold *Caltha*
- Turtlehead *Chelone*
- Snakeroot *Cimicifuga*
- Bleeding Heart *Dicentra*
- Foxglove *Digitalis*
- Shooting Star *Dodecatheon*
- Trout Lily *Erythronium*
- Gentian *Gentiana*
- Liverleaf *Hepatica*
- Gooseneck Loosestrife *Lysimachia*
- Virginia Bluebells *Mertensia*
- Primroses *Primula*
- Lungwort *Pulmonaria*
- Bloodroot *Sanguinaria*
- False Solomon's Seal *Smilacina*
- Toad-lily *Tricyrtis*
- Trillium *Trillium*
- Spiderwort *Tradescantia*
- Bellwort *Uvularia*

### Heavy to Light Shade

- Jack in the Pulpit *Arisaema*
- European Wild Ginger *Asarum*
- Bunchberry *Cornus Canadensis*
- Fairy Bells *Disporum*
- Plantain Lily or Funkia *Hosta*
- Solomon's Seal *Polygonatum*

### Ornamental Grasses

#### Light to Medium Shade:

- Tuber Oat Grass *Arrhenatherum*
- Sedge *Carex*
- Hairgrass *Deschampsia*
- Horsetail *Equisetum*
- Hakone Grass *Hakonechloa*
- Rush *Juncus*
- Woodrush *Luzula*
- Ribbongrass *Phalaris*
- Prarie Dropseed *Sporobolus*

### Groundcovers

- Snow on the Mountain *Aegopodium*
- Bugle Weed *Ajuga*
- Lilies of the Valley *Convallaria*
- Barrenwort *Epimedium*
- Sweet Woodruff *Galium odoratum*
- Archangel *Lamiastrum*
- Dead Nettle *Lamium*
- Japanese Spurge *Pachysandra*
- Periwinkle or Myrtle *Vinca*
- Violets *Viola*
- Barren Strawberry *Waldsteinia*

### Ornamental Ferns

#### Light to Medium Shade:

- Maidenhair *Adiantum*
- Lady *Athyrium*
- Hay Scented *Dennstaedtia*
- Sensitive *Onoclea*
- Ostrich *Matteucia*

#### Dry Shade

- Barrenwort *Epimedium*
- Wild Geranium *Geranium*
- Plantain Lily or Funkia *Hosta*
- Dead Nettle *Lamium*
- Japanese Spurge *Pachysandra*

#### Medium to Heavy Shade

- Wood *Dryopteris*
- Autumn *Dryopteris*
- Shaggy Shield *Dryopteris*
- Male *Dryopteris*
- Leatherwood *Dryopteris*
- Cinnamon *Osmunda*
- Interrupted *Osmunda*
- Royal *Osmunda*
- Christmas *Polystichum*