



# SHADE GARDENING

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In New England, mature shade trees are very much the gardener's friend. They moderate temperatures during the hot, dry summer months and give your garden background structure as well as year-long interest. Even when your garden is filled with sun for much of the day, a few hours of shade gives the gardener a wide variety of plants to choose from and to experiment with.

Providing a place to sit makes a shady garden more interesting --- and is especially welcome on a hot summer's day. If grass is a problem, you can make a strolling pathway along the side of the shade garden, with containers used as focal points.

The first step in designing a shade garden is to assess the type of shade you have:

**Light shade:** Usually found beneath deciduous trees.  
The sun/shade pattern changes throughout the day.  
Provides 4-6 hours of direct sun a day.

A large number of bulbs and perennials thrive in these conditions, many flowering in the spring.

**Partial shade:** Usually occurs as the sun moves across the sky.  
Provides 2-4 hours of sun a day often produced by morning sun and afternoon shade.  
The afternoon shade protects plants such as hydrangeas from too much heat.

Many perennials will "stretch" to meet these conditions.

**Deep shade:** Usually found beneath evergreens.  
No direct sun during the day.  
Low light available during daylight hours.  
Plants must demand shade in order to thrive and will usually feature foliage.  
Soil will require amending

It is often possible to bring in more light by professional pruning of low branches.

## **Soil and water requirements:**

Many shade-loving plants are woodland natives. They need soil rich in organic materials (compost or shredded leaves) and prefer to be kept evenly moist. Your shade plants will be competing for their food and water with the surrounding trees and bushes. A regular watering and feeding program will be very beneficial and the use of mulch will keep the plants from drying out. Do not let fallen fall leaves pile up as they will smother the air all plants need to thrive.

## **Matching your plants to the site:**

One of the most popular ways to garden in the shade is to design in layers, depending on form, texture and variegated foliage to sustain interest. Early spring bulbs will give color. Using new cultivars of old faithfuls like begonias, impatiens, and coleus will provide punch as will variegated foliage. A backdrop of bushes will give substance to your site and there are a number of vines which can be trained to climb over a trellis to give a focal point.

Light shade gives you the widest range of plants to choose from but many plants suitable for deep shade can also handle partial shade. Some experimentation is inevitable and you will be surprised at how many plants will cheerfully adapt to some shade as long as their soil and water requirements are met.

Plants grow more slowly in shade so there is less pruning and dividing. (Weeds also grow more slowly!) Chores in a shady garden are less demanding in general than those in formal perennial gardens.

**Trees and shrubs** will form the backbone of your shade garden:

**Light/partial shade:**

Abelia	
Acer japonica	(Japanese Maples)
Amelanchier	(Shadbush)
Azalea	
Clethra alnifolia	(Summersweet)
Cornus alternifolia	(Pagoda Dogwood)
Cornus florida	(Flowering Dogwood)
Cornus kousa	(Japanese Dogwood)
Daphne	
Forsythia	
Fothergilla	
Gaultheria procumbens	(Wintergreen)
Hamamelis mollis	(Chinese Witch Hazel)
Hamamelis virginiana	(Common Witch Hazel)
Hydrangea arborescens	(‘Annabelle’)
Hydrangea macrophylla	(Mop-headed Hydrangeas)
Ilex crenata	(Japanese Holly)
Ilex verticillata	(Winterberry)
Kalmia latifolia	(Mountain Laurel)
Rhododendrons	
Viburnum carlesii	(Korean Spice Viburnum)

**Deep shade:**

Aesculus parviflora	(Bottlebrush Buckeye)
Buxus	(Boxwood)
Cornus mas	(Cornelian Cherry Dogwood)
Euonymus fortuneii	(Creeping Euonymous)
Hydrangea quercifolia	(Oak Leaf Hydrangea)
Leucothoe	(Fetterbush)
Pieris	(Mountain Andromeda))
Taxus	(Yew)

**Perennials:** will carry the next level:

**Light/partial shade:**

Aconitum	(Monkshood)
Aquilegia	(Columbine)
Astilbe chinensis	(False Spirea)
Brunnera	(Siberian Bugloss)
Campanula	(Bellflower)

Chelone	(Turtlehead)
Dicentra	(Bleeding Heart))
Digitalis	(Foxglove)
Iberis	(Candytuft)
Lobelia	(Cardinal Flower)
Monarda	(Bee Balm)
Mysotis	(Forget-Me-Not)
Sagina	(Mosses)
Phlox divaricata	(Canadian phlox)
Polemonium	(Jacob's Ladder)
Viola	(Violets)

**Deep shade:**

Ajuga	(Bugleweed)
Asarum	(Ginger)
Bergenia cordifolia	(Heartleaf Bergenia)
Cimicifuga	(Snakeroot)
Corydalis	(Yellow Bleeding Heart)
Dicentra spectabilis	(Old Fashioned Bleeding Heart)
Hosta	
Mertensia	(Virginia Bluebells)
Ferns	
Phlox stolonifera	(Creeping Phlox)
Polygonatum	(Solomon's Seal)
Primula	(Primrose)
Pulmonaria	(Lungwort)

**Annuals:** will give spots of color towards the front of the garden:

**Light/partial shade:**

Coleus blumeii	(Coleus)
Colocassia	(Elephant Ears)
Fuschia	
Hypoestes	(Polka Dot Plant)
Impatiens	
Lobelia	
Minulus	(Monkey Flower)
Nicotiana	(Flowering Tobacco)
Osteospermum	(Cape Daisy)
Pansy	
Torenia	

**Deep shade:**

Begonia semperflorens	(Wax Begonia)
Hedera helix	(English Ivy)
Pilea	(Aluminum Plant)
Vinca	(Annual Vinca)

**Groundcovers** will cover bare spaces and provide eye-flow:

**Light/partial shade:**

Astilbe chinensis 'Pumila'	(Astilbe)
Cymbalaria muralis	(Kenilworth Ivy)
Geranium macrorrhizum	(Cranesbill)
Lamium maculatum	(Dead Nettle)
Lamiastrum	(Variegated Lamiastrum)

**Deep shade:**

Convallaria majalis	(Lily-of-the-Valley)
Cornus Canadensis	(Bunchberry)
Epimedium	(Epimedium)
Galium odoratum	(Sweet Woodruff)
Gaultheria procumbens	(Wintergreen)
Pachysandra	(Japanese Spurge)
Tiarella	(Foam Flower)
Vinca minor	(Myrtle)

**Vines** can be used as accents:

**Light/partial shade:**

Aristolochia durior	(Dutchman's Pipe)
Campsis radicans	(Trumpet Vin)
Clematis paniculata	(Sweet Autumn Clematis)
Lonicera spp.	(Honeysuckle)
Polygonum aubertii	(Silver Lace Vine)

**Deep shade:**

Actinidia arguta	(Bower Actinidia)
Euonymous fortunei	(Wintercreeper)
Hedera helix	(Annual English Ivy)
Hydrangea anomala pet.	(Climbing Hydrangea)