



SUMMER
2010



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Unique Garden Centre

From the Ground Up

Made in the Shade

As your yard develops and matures, there is often an increasing need for shade tolerant plants in the yard. It is tough adjustment initially from the color and fragrance of the sunny flower bed, but as you investigate your options you will be in for a surprise. For the novice shade gardener, these plants are often overlooked at the garden centers when the iris or lilies are flashing their petals at you. Shade plants have a much more subtle, quiet beauty about them.

Shade plants tend to have large leaves to capture as much sunlight as possible, so rather than obsessing about flowers, sophisticated shade gardeners tend to emphasize leaf shapes, textures, and colors, the new shade gardener will usually pick impatiens or begonias for the color fix they give. Impatiens is much loved precisely because it likes shade and blooms all season long. But a steady diet of nothing but impatiens gets a tad predictable, not to mention that they're definitely more work to plant every year than perennials. Instead mix clumps of soft colored impatiens among shade perennials with texture to give your bed more depth and a sense of serenity. Add a bench so that you can relax and soak up that peace that just seems to be in the air.

Five ways to get the most out of lush leaves:

1. Play shapes against each other to create pleasing plant pictures. For example, combine the grassy, strap like leaves of Siberian iris with plants that have bold, heart shaped or rounded leaves such as with hostas or bergenias.
2. Contrast simple, bold leaf shapes such as those found in hostas with plants that have lacy compound leaves, such as astilbes or ferns.
3. Plant in groups for the best effect. A generous drift of five astilbes or ferns will have more impact next to a large specimen hosta than just one or two lonely little astilbes or ferns.
4. Use foliage plants, especially those with interesting leaf colors. In addition to hostas, which come in a variety of leaf colors, try Pennisetum arundinacea (ribbon grass) a shade loving ornamental grass, Gold Heart bleeding heart, and Pulmonaria 'Mrs. Moon' which has leaves with silver spots.
5. Variegated leaves – foliage with distinct marking such as white or yellow on green – add a touch of brightness to a shady area. Plants with white variegation do well in deeper shade, while plants with yellow variegation have a better yellow color if they get light or dappled shade. Blue leaved plants will not tolerate direct sun at all especially in our hot summer climate.

Amazing Astilbe

Growing Astilbe in the shade garden is easy. With some shade, rich soil and good moisture it will thrive.

How To Grow

Astilbe thrive in shady gardens but will take some sunshine if they are well watered. This is *not* a plant of the hot, dry, sunny garden or the dry shade garden. The main quality for success with this plant is dampish soils. Do not grow underwater. The crowns require good drainage and not standing water. When happy, this is a fast spreading plant and will require regular edging to keep it within bounds.

Propagation

While Astilbe will start from seed, it is much easier to divide this plant in early spring or fall. Division also means your new plant will be identical to the parent plant. Simply dig off a chunk of the mother plant with a shovel and move to a new section of the garden. Ensure you get some new growth with the division and the plant will move successfully.

Hardiness

This plant is hardy to zone 3

Varieties

There are many varieties of Astilbe. Some of the best are Amethyst' (deep lavender), 'Bressingham Beauty' (vibrant, deep pink), 'Fanal' (older variety bronze leaves in spring then green, red plumes) and 'Sprite' (shell pink flowers over bronze leaves.)

Coping with Dry Shade

Trees have root systems that spread beyond the crown, and such roots are strong competitors for soil nutrients and moisture. You're most likely to find dry shade under trees with wide spreading, shallow roots such as poplar and maple and willow and of course evergreens. To give your shade plants the best possible chance under such conditions, water deeply and fertilize more often than you normally would.

Most shade plants prefer moist soil, so dry shade is a special challenge for gardeners. The following plants will perk up a dry, shady spot in your garden – which is not to say that they prefer dryness, just that they'll do better than other shade plants. But be sure to water well while they're getting established.

Bishop's Hat
Lamium
Lamiastrum
Bergenia
Sweet Woodruff
Pachysandra
Vinca Vine

If these plants don't work, or you want to do the least amount of work possible, you can just take the path of least resistance and put a layer of mulch under your trees. But you do want to give this kind of garden a try – right?

2010 Perennial of the Year



Each year members of the Perennial Plant Association select a perennial plant of the year. The chosen plant for 2010 is *Baptisia australis*, more commonly known as Blue False Indigo. One of the most adaptable native species, this easy to grow, sun-loving perennial forms a large bushy mound of blue-green leaves perfect for the middle to back of the border. In early summer it produces long spikes of indigo-blue flowers that resemble lupines. The seedpods that develop after three to four weeks of flowering, dry, turn black, and change into rattling seedheads. Stems are strong and usually remain in place all winter. They need to be cut back to the ground in spring before the new growth resumes. It thrives in full sun. Plants grown in partial shade may require staking. It is easily grown in well-drained soil and is drought tolerant after establishment.

Spotlight On

Our “Spotlight On” page provides information on a different tree, shrub and perennial in each addition of “From the Ground Up”

Bergenia cordifolia

A clump forming perennial with glossy, leathery, dark green leaves that turn purple in the fall. Dark pink flowers bloom in spring. This plant likes full sun to part shade. This plant grows to a height of 24” tall and spreads up to 36” wide. It is hardy to zone 3.



Globe Blue Spruce

Picea pungens ‘Glauca Globosa’

This globe shaped evergreen with bright silver blue foliage is an excellent accent plant in the landscape. This slow growing plant prefers full sun. It has a height and spread of about 6’.

Ohio Buckeye Tree

Aesculus glabra

This is a very hardy ornamental tree with glossy green palmately compound foliage and masses of light yellow flowers which appear on the branch tips in late spring. It has red-orange fall colour and beige round fruit. This tree grows to a height of 35’ and spreads about 30’





Garden Helpers



In spite of their bad reputation, bats really do us a favour. They are the primary predator of night-flying insects such as moths, beetles and mosquitoes. A single bat can consume 30-50% of its body weight in insects each night. A healthy colony of bats can protect gardens from damage by cucumber beetles, moths, cutworms and leafhoppers. Putting up bat houses is a great way to help bat populations. Free plans and kits are available on the Internet. The following tips can help guide the design and placement of a bat house

- Bats prefer warm environments; Make sure the bat house gets at least 10 hours of direct sunlight during the day. Painting the house a dark color also helps absorb heat.
- Make sure there is a clear entrance to the bat house.
- Make sure there's a source of fresh water within a quarter-mile of the bat house.
- Keep the bat house away from any light sources.
- Use untreated wood; it contains no harmful chemicals.
- Keep the surfaces inside the house rough; this allows the bats to grip its floor or walls more easily.

A garden that receives less than 6 hours of direct sunlight per day is considered a shade garden.

Full Shade: no sunlight directly reaches the area, it may reach the area by reflecting off surrounding areas.

Deep Shade: no sunlight reaches the area. This type of shade is inhabitable by annuals.

Filtered Shade: sunlight peaks through structures, branches of trees or fences to reach an area.

Part Shade: Morning sun and late evening sun may hit the area but during the majority of the day the area is shady.



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