

Made for the Shade:

The Right Perennials for Shady Landscapes

Having trouble finding plants that will survive in full or mostly shaded areas of the landscape? You're not alone. Many customers come to us asking for advice on what to plant on north sides of houses, in wooded areas, in plantings under large trees, and in other shady locales. While you do have to be cautious when selecting plants for shady areas, there are still plenty of choices that will give you color and blooms in the shade. Here are just a few of the shade-loving perennials that we carry:

Astilbe– Attractive feathery sprays of thick, fuzzy flowers on this perennial contrast nicely with its dark, coarse-textured, serrated foliage. Available in red, pink, or white.

Bergenia– Outstanding thick, glossy semi-evergreen foliage combined with luscious stalks of bright pink spring flowers make this a stunner year-round. The rich green leaves go to a brilliant purple in winter.

Columbine– We carry many different varieties of this classic perennial in a wide array of bloom colors, ranging from bright crimson/rose to deep purple to yellow and white. Unique lobed foliage adds to the beauty of this timeless favorite.

Heuchera (Coral Bells)- Heuchera have, over the years, proven themselves to be genetic marvels! Originally, they were only available in one foliage color– green. Thanks to expert plant breeders, this popular group of perennials has been able to expand in the last several decades to include dark-foliaged varieties, most of them in varying shades of purple. The most recent advancements in plant breeding have led to the addition of several light-foliaged varieties to Heuchera's arsenal. We have begun carrying several of these brand new, light colored varieties, including: peach, lime-green, red-orange, amber, ginger-yellow, and orange-gold. We have found that these coral bells tend to stand out better in the shade and against dark mulch than some of the purple varieties, though they are all excellent specimens. These lighter varieties, such as 'Peach Flambe,' 'Georgia Peach,' 'Lime Rickey,' 'Ginger Ale,' and 'Caramel' really glow from a distance and help brighten up those dark areas in the landscape. We carry a total of almost 20 different varieties of Heuchera!

Speaking of Heuchera... This next one is a hybrid between Heuchera and Tiarella.

Heucherella– With parents that are both shade-lovers, this one was bound to be a great shade plant, as well. The variety that we carry here at the nursery is called 'Stoplight,' and it certainly does beg to be noticed! The large, screaming yellow leaves with bright red centers are a striking combination, especially against the airy white flower stalks that appear in spring. These little guys are truly luminous in the shade.

Hosta– Hostas are probably the most popular and well-known of all the shade perennials for their thick, large showy leaves and vigorous growth habit. Our selection of hostas includes nearly 30 unique varieties. Because the mature sizes on hostas range anywhere from eight to forty inches, they can find a home in practically any landscape. The bright, two-toned leaves on many hosta varieties are very attractive from a distance. And the best part... The spikes of lavender or white trumpet-shaped flowers on hostas are a favorite of hummingbirds.

Lamium– One of the best flowering groundcovers for shady landscape areas, Lamium has definitely earned its great reputation. Most varieties bloom in shades of orchid, pink, or white, and the foliage on nearly all varieties is a radiant silver with green margins. However, we do carry one variety, called ‘Anne Greenaway’ whose leaves are a dramatic blend of chartreuse, silver, medium-green, and mint green. In dark, shaded landscapes, Lamium really shimmers!

Pachysandra– This shady groundcover is prized for its lustrous evergreen foliage and its white, bottlebrush flowers in the spring. Once established, it is a very vigorous grower and is great for use on slopes or at ground level.

Pulmonaria– In addition to being one of the earliest perennials to bloom in the spring, Pulmonaria also have some of the most unique foliage of all perennials. They boast large, heavy leaves with vivid silver spots, though some are more heavily spotted than others. This unusual foliage creates an exquisite contrast with the abundant clusters of blue/purple (fading to pink) spring flowers. Hummingbirds love these delicate, bell-shaped blossoms.