

Dry Shade



In dry shade situations, usually there is a period of some moisture in the winter and early spring. Take advantage of this period by planting new starts. This moist time helps the plants settle in. Greatest success comes when the new plants receive some water through the hot summer, so they can establish a good root system. This root system helps the plants to survive drought in coming years. The following list of plants is suitable for dry shade.

Acer circinatum- Vine Maple. Our native maple which can grow 6-20' tall.

Acanthus spinosus- Bear's Breach

Alchemilla mollis- Ladie's Mantel

Asarum caudatum- Wild Ginger. A ground cover with secret flowers.

Bergenia- Evergreen, white or pink flowers.

Crocus species

Dicentra formosa- Native bleeding heart.

Epimedium sp.- A weaving ground cover, shallow rooted.

Erythronium sp. - Dog-tooth violet, Fawn lily. Summer dormant.

Euphorbia robiae, E 'Tasmanian Tiger'- Evergreen

Galanthus sp. - Snowdrops. Summer dormant.

Helleborus orientalis. - Water in the first season is crucial.

Hosta- Water the first season.

Iris douglasiana* or *I. tenax- Pacific Coast iris. Tolerant of partial shade.

Lamium sp. - A shallow rooted ground cover. Great under densely rooted trees.

Linnaea borealis- Twin flower. A vining native ground cover, evergreen.

Liriope sp.-Evergreen. Shallow rooted.

Mahonia nervosa* and *M. repens- Oregon grape. Shallow rooted. Native!

Narcissus sp. - Daffodil.

Ompheloides- Deciduous ground cover.

Ophiopogon japonica- Mondo grass. Low evergreen groundcover. Shallow roots.

Oxalis oregana- Wood sorrel. Native

Pachysandra terminalis- Shallow rooted.

Polystichum munitum- Sword Fern.

Saracocca- Small shrubs 6"-3' tall.

Saxifraga stolonifera- Shallow rooted.

Smilacina racemosa- False Solomon's Seal.

Symphytum sp. - Comfrey. Can be invasive if dug after planting.

Vaccinium ovatum- Evergreen Huckelberry. Water 1st season.

Viola labradorica- Readily reseeds.

Wet shade



An area is often termed as wet shade due to heavy soil and poor drainage. In all cases of shade, mix in compost with the existing soil before planting.

Acer circinatum- Vine Maple

Acorus- Evergreen, grass-like.

Aruncus-Goat's Beard. Mid spring blooms.

Astilbe- Bright summer blooms.

Baby's tears- Tiny ground cover.

Calthea- Early yellow flowers. Spreads readily.

Carex- Soft grasses. Some are evergreen.

Cornus stolonifera- Red Twig Dogwood. Deciduous shrub. Great by streams.

Gunnera manicata- Loves pond edges.

Fillipendula- Part shade

Juncus effusa- Tolerates standing water.

Lamium- Ground cover.

Ligularia- Fun foliage, late blooms.

Lobelia cardinalis- Red summer blooms.

Metasequoia glyptostroboides- Dawn Redwood. Deciduous conifer reaching 50-80' tall. Part shade.

Mimulus- Monkey flower.

Ompheloides- Deciduous ground cover with blue flowers in spring.

Pachysandra- Evergreen ground cover. Shallow rooted.

Petasites sp. - Running plants with large leaves.

Polygonatum- Solomon's seal. Does not tolerate standing water.

Rodgersia- Large leaves. Loves stream sides and pond edges.

Veratrum- Excellent foliage plant. Requires at least four hours of direct sun.

Zantedeschia- Calla Lily. Large white flowers. Requires at least 4-6 hours of direct sun.

Deep Shade



Areas of deep shade receive no direct sun in the height of the season. In dappled shade, some light filters through and there are more possibilities than listed here. Prepare deep shade areas for planting by adding compost to the existing soil.

Acanthopanax sieboldianus 'Variegata'- Deciduous shrub 8-10'.

Acer circinatum- Vine Maple.

Acer palmatum- Variegated varieties. Most variegated varieties are upright in form reaching 10-20' tall.

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Tips for tough shade

Dry Shade

> Mulch beds to help maintain soil moisture, and promotes healthy soil microbes. We recommend mulching with compost at least once a year in the fall.

> If tree roots are too dense, cover planting area with 6-8" of compost and soil mixture. Plant directly into this mixture. Lift plants and replenish soil mixture every five years.

In addition, you can put down some synthetic or metal screening over the tree roots to prevent them from growing into your new plants. Then put down 6-8" of compost and soil mix. Shallow rooted plants work very well under heavily rooted trees.

Wet Shade

> In addition to adding compost to your soil, you can also add pumice, to help drainage.

> Try to avoid walking in areas of moist shade as much as possible. Walking on wet soil can lead to soil compaction.

Written by Laura Altvater

Deep shade continued

Asarum Canadensis- Wild Ginger. A creeping ground cover.

Aucuba- Evergreen shrub reaching 8-10' tall and wide.

Corydalis- Blue flowers in spring. Will not tolerate dry or wet shade.

Fatsia- Shrub with large evergreen leaves. Reaches 5-8' tall.

Fatshedera- A vining evergreen with large palmate leaves.

Fuchsia- Small flowered *F. magellanica* varieties tolerate deep shade.

Hosta- non-variegated varieties.

Lamium- Shallow rooted ground cover.

Liriope- Evergreen grass like plant with lilac flowers.

Lonicera nitida, L. pileata- Evergreen shrubs reaching 3-6' tall and wide.

Mahonia nervosa, M. repens- Oregon grape. Evergreen. 1-3' tall.

Narcissus- Daffodil

Ophiopogon- Mondo Grass. 6-8" tall tiny grass like foliage.

Pachysandra- Evergreen ground cover.

Saracocca- Small evergreen shrubs 6"-3' tall.

Tsuga- Hemlock. A large group of conifers that thrive in the shade.

Viola- Early spring flowers.

Tough shade

Tough shade situations

Plants for dry, wet and deep shade areas.



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Shades of Shade

In a city with so many large trees and heavy rains, there are many difficult shady planting areas. Here we discuss the three most difficult shade situations, dry, wet and deep shade. Dry shade often occurs beneath conifers or deciduous trees. In this situation, new plants have to compete for water with an established tree. Dry shade can also occur under the eaves of houses. Wet shade can be a poorly drained corner, a streamside, or truly boggy soils. The third challenging shade gardening area is full deep shade. Deep or full shade does not receive any direct sun all day, but may have light. For example, the north side of a house, which only receives reflected light, is deep shade. If you have a combination of any of these situations, dry deep shade under a conifer, look for plants listed in both categories.

Cultural tips for establishing new plants are outlined in the tips for tough shade section. Please keep in mind that plants are subject to seasonal availability.

