



Shade Gardening

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(Botanical name) common name	Height	Flower color and time	Shade level			Ornamental features (in addition to flowers)	Culture			Comments
			light	medium	full		Moist, well drained	Tolerates wet sites	Tolerates dry sites	
Ground Covers										
(<i>Ajuga reptans</i>) Ajuga or bugleweed	4 inches	Purple or white; late spring- early summer	✓	✓		Some varieties available offering different foliage and flower colors	✓			After flowering is through, flowers can be mowed off to keep the ground cover tidy.
(<i>Asarum canadense</i>) Wild Ginger	6-8 inches	Non-showy flowers in spring	✓	✓	✓	Attractive, hairy, kidney-shaped foliage	✓			Grown for foliage, not flowers.
(<i>Asarum europaeum</i>) European Wild Ginger	6-8 inches	Non-showy flowers in spring	✓	✓	✓	Attractive, glossy, kidney-shaped foliage	✓			Grown for foliage, not flowers.
(<i>Convallaria majalis</i>) Lily-of-the-Valley	6-12 inches	White; spring	✓	✓	✓	Occasionally produces red-orange berries	✓			Fairly rapid spreader; can grow under trees as it competes well with tree roots.
(<i>Epimedium x rubrum</i>) Red Epimedium	1 foot	Reddish; midspring	✓	✓	✓	Foliage tinged red in spring; maintains red margin through summer; fall color is bronze	✓			Grown more for foliage than for flowers; relatively slow growth rate.
(<i>Epimedium x versicolor</i>) Persian Epimedium	1 foot	Yellow; midspring	✓	✓	✓	Spring and fall leaves tinged reddish	✓			Grown more for foliage than for flowers; relatively slow growth rate.
(<i>Euonymus fortunei</i>) Winter Creeper	4-6 inches or taller	Green, not of interest	✓	✓	✓	Numerous varieties available, varying in leaf color and size; evergreen leaves	✓		✓	Numerous varieties available varying in cold hardiness; scale insects can be a serious problem; also susceptible to crown gall

(<i>Galium odoratum</i>) Sweet Woodruff	6-10 inches	White; spring	✓	✓	✓	Interesting foliage	✓			Spreads at a moderate rate; crushed foliage smells like new-mown hay; grows well under trees.
(<i>Hedera helix</i>) English Ivy	6-8 inches	Green, not of interest	✓	✓	✓	Interesting foliage; evergreen	✓			Fast growing; susceptible to spider mites; some varieties such as 'Bulgaria', 'Hebron' and 'Thorndale' are particularly cold hardy.
(<i>Houttuynia cordata</i> 'Chameleon') Houttuynia	6-9 inches	White; early summer	✓	✓	✓	Multicolored foliage (red, green and cream)	✓	✓		Can be a very aggressive grower, so may be a problem in perennial beds; on the other hand it is very hard to kill and could be the answer to a difficult planting site.
(<i>Lamiastrum galeobdolon</i>) Yellow Archangel	1 foot	Yellow; late spring	✓	✓	✓	Green leaves with silver markings	✓			Fast grower, can become aggressive.
(<i>Lamium maculatum</i>) Spotted Dead Nettle	Up to 1 foot	Purplish, white or pink; spring	✓	✓		Variegated foliage	✓			Can be aggressive.
(<i>Pachysandra terminalis</i>) Japanese Spurge	9-12 inches	White; spring	✓	✓	✓	Waxy green leaves; evergreen	✓			Best in acid soil, but also tolerates neutral soil.
(<i>Vinca minor</i>) Common Periwinkle	3-6 inches	Purple-blue; spring	✓	✓	✓	Evergreen leaves	✓			Clean out plantings regularly to increase air circulation and prevent stem disease; 'Alba' has white flowers; 'Variegata' has blue flowers and cream-edged leaves
(<i>Waldsteinia ternata</i>) Barren Strawberry	3-4 inches	Yellow; spring-early summer	✓	✓		Foliage is like that of strawberries	✓		✓	Can also tolerate sun if moisture is adequate.
Ferns										
(<i>Adiantum pedatum</i>) Northern Maidenhair Fern	1-2 feet	No flowers	✓	✓	✓	Delicate foliage	✓			Must be kept moist at all times.
(<i>Athyrium nipponicum</i> 'Pictum') Japanese Painted Fern	12-18 inches	No flowers	✓	✓	✓	Foliage is gray green, tinged with maroon	✓			Avoid windy sites as the fronds are easily broken.
(<i>Dennstaedtia punctilobula</i>) Cup Fern	1-2 feet	No flowers	✓	✓		Foliage is fine textured; yellow fall color	✓		✓	Spreads fairly easily so may be a problem in small gardens.

(<i>Dryopteris marginalis</i>) Marginal Wood Fern	1 1/2 -2 1/2 feet	No flowers	✓	✓	✓	Gray green foliage	✓		✓	Easy to grow.
(<i>Matteuccia struthiopteris</i>) Ostrich Fern	2-5 feet	No flowers	✓	✓	✓	Fertile fronds are green becoming brown and woody	✓	✓		Spreads fairly easily so may be a problem in small gardens.
(<i>Osmunda cinnamomea</i>) Cinnamon Fern	2-4 feet	No flowers	✓	✓	✓	Fertile fronds are cinnamon colored	✓	✓		Tends to spread relatively slowly.
(<i>Polystichum acrostichoides</i>) Christmas Fern	2-3 feet	No flowers	✓	✓	✓	Evergreen foliage	✓			Easy to grow.
(<i>Woodwardia areolata</i>) Netted Chain Fern	1-2 feet	No flowers	✓	✓		Fertile fronds emerge reddish green then turn dark green	✓	✓		Easy to grow.

Annuals, biennials and summer bulbs

(<i>Ageratum houstonianum</i>) Floss Flower, Ageratum	6-18 inches	Blue, lavender, white; all season	✓				✓			Dead head to keep plants flowering. (Annual)
(<i>Begonia x semperflorens-cultorum</i>) Wax Begonia	8-12 inches	Pink, white, red; most of the season	✓			Glossy, variegated foliage	✓			Single- and double-flowered cultivars available. (Annual)
(<i>Begonia x tuberhybrida</i>) Tuberous Begonia	12-18 inches	Wide range of colors; all season	✓			Crisp leaves	✓			Tubers may be dug after the first frost and stored indoors. (Summer bulb)
(<i>Caladium</i> hybrids) Caladium	1-2 feet	Grown for foliage, not flowers	✓	✓	✓	Grown for foliage; foliage colors are a mix of red, pink, green and white	✓			Tubers may be dug and stored before frost (when leaf color begins to fade); some new cultivars are sun tolerant. (Summer bulb)
(<i>Colocasia esculenta</i>) Elephant Ears	3-3 1/2 feet	Grown for foliage, not flowers	✓	✓		Grown for foliage; leaves are large and tropical looking	✓	✓		Wind can damage the large leaves. Tubers may be dug after the first frost and stored indoors. (Summer bulb)
(<i>Digitalis purpurea</i>) Common Foxglove	2-4 feet	Purple; most of season	✓	✓			✓			Plants will self sow. (Biennial)
(<i>Impatiens balsamina</i>) Balsam	1-3 feet	Range of colors; all season	✓	✓			✓			(Annual)
(<i>Impatiens</i> hybrids) Impatiens	6-18 inches	Range of colors; all season	✓	✓			✓			Single- and double-flowered cultivars are available. (Annual)

(Solenostemon scutellarioides) Coleus	1-2 feet	Grown for foliage	✓	✓	✓	Numerous cultivars; range of leaf colors	✓			Some cultivars of coleus can also be used in full sun. (Annual)
(Viola x wittrockiana) Pansy	6-8 inches	Several; fall and spring	✓				✓			These annuals can tolerate a lot of cold and are often the first annuals sold in spring. (Annuals)
Perennials										
(Aconitum napellus) Monkshood	3-4 feet	Blue, violet; July and August	✓	✓	✓		✓			This plant is poisonous and its sap should not be ingested; aggressive grower; difficult to transplant.
(Actaea pachypoda) Doll's Eyes	2-3 feet	White; spring	✓	✓	✓	White berries with a dark 'eye' (doll's eyes)	✓			Berries are poisonous.
(Actaea rubra) Red Baneberry	18 inches	White; summer	✓	✓	✓	Red berries	✓			Berries are poisonous.
(Alchemilla mollis) Lady's Mantle	8-18 inches	Yellow-green; June-July	✓			Attractive foliage	✓			Will self sow.
(Anemone x hybrida) Japanese Anemone	1-4 feet	Red, pink or white; late sum. , early fall	✓			Attractive foliage	✓			
(Aquilegia hybrids) Columbine	1-3 feet	Range of colors; May-June	✓	✓			✓			Flowering will be prolonged in partially shaded sites; leaf miner (insect) can be damaging to the leaves; self-sows.
(Arisaema triphyllum) Jack in the Pulpit	1-2 feet	Green, brown; April-May	✓	✓	✓	Red berries follow the female flowers	✓	✓		Unique flower structure is interesting.
(Aruncus dioicus) Goatsbeard	4-6 feet	White; June-July	✓				✓			Male and female flowers are on separate plants. Both flower well.
(Astilbe species and hybrids) Astilbe	2-3 feet	White, pink, red, lavender; June-July	✓	✓		Divided foliage, almost fern-like	✓			Many cultivars available. Soil should be consistently moist.
(Bergenia cordifolia) Bergenia	12-18 inches	White or pink, April-May	✓			Leaves evergreen, with a succulent look and bronze tinge.	✓			Slugs are a common pest.
(Brunnera macrophylla) Siberian Bugloss	12-18 inches	Blue; April-May	✓	✓	✓	Heart shaped foliage	✓			Self-sows, but not weedy. Some cultivars are available with variegated leaves.
(Campanula carpatica) Carpathian Harebells	6-12 inches	Blue, violet or white; June-Aug	✓				✓			Good for the rock garden

(<i>Campanula glomerata</i>) Clustered Bellflower	18-24 inches	Violet; June-July	✓			✓	✓		May become aggressive.
(<i>Centaurea montana</i>) Mountain Bluet	1-2 feet	Blue or white; May-July	✓			✓		✓	Self sows.
(<i>Chelone</i> species) Turtlehead	2-3 feet	Pink, white; Aug-Sept	✓		Clean, crisp foliage throughout season.	✓	✓		Very sturdy plant but may need staking if shade is too deep.
(<i>Cimicifuga racemosa</i>) Bugbane	4-6 feet	White; July-Aug	✓			✓			About half the height is a result of the flower stalk.
(<i>Cimicifuga ramosa</i>) Bugbane	4-6 feet	White; early fall	✓		Some cultivars have bronze or maroon foliage	✓			Flowers are fragrant.
(<i>Corydalis lutea</i>) Yellow Corydalis	6-12 inches	Yellow; all season	✓	✓	Delicate fern-like foliage	✓			Self sows; may become aggressive.
(<i>Dicentra cucullaria</i>) Dutchman's Breeches	6-12 inches	White; April-May	✓	✓	Divided foliage	✓			Will go dormant in summer.
(<i>Dicentra spectabilis</i>) Bleeding Heart	1 ½- 3 feet	Pink; May-June	✓		Divided foliage	✓			May go dormant in heat of summer.
(<i>Dodecatheon meadia</i>) Shooting Star	6-18 inches	Pink or white; April-June	✓	✓		✓			Goes dormant in summer.
(<i>Eupatorium</i> species) Joe-Pye Weed	5-6 feet	Dusty pink; July-Sept	✓			✓	✓		Avoid dry sites as these plants will wilt easily.
(<i>Gentiana andrewsii</i>) Closed Gentian	12-18 inches	Blue; Aug-Sept	✓	✓		✓	✓		Flowers stay closed.
(<i>Geranium maculatum</i>) Wild Geranium	1-2 feet	Rose pink; April-June	✓		Attractive foliage	✓			Self sows.
(<i>Geranium phaeum</i>) Mourning Widow	6-12 inches	purple; June-Aug	✓	✓	Green foliage marked with purple	✓			Self sows.
(<i>Geranium sanguineum</i>) Bloodred Cranesbill	6-12 inches	Magenta; May-Aug	✓		Deeply cut leaves	✓			Tolerates more sun than other species of <i>Geranium</i> .
(<i>Helleborus</i> hybrids) Hellebores	12-15 inches	White, pink, green, purple mix; early spring	✓	✓		✓			Prefer a neutral to alkaline soil.
(<i>Hemerocallis</i> hybrids) Daylily	1-4 feet	Wide range June-Sept*	✓			✓			*Extend bloom by selecting cultivars with different bloom times.

(<i>Heuchera sanguinea</i>) Coral Bells	6-24 inches*	White, pink or red; June-July	✓		Some cultivars have striking foliage.	✓			*6" in leaf, but up to 24" in flower. Dainty flowers are attractive to hummingbirds.
(<i>Hosta</i> species and hybrids) Hosta	1-2 ½ feet	White, lavender; Aug-Sept	✓	✓	✓	Beautiful foliage in many colors and patterns	✓		Many cultivars; grown more for foliage than flowers. Slugs can be a problem.
(<i>Iris sibirica</i>) Siberian Iris	1-3 feet	Blue, purple; May-June	✓				✓		Resistant to iris borer.
(<i>Ligularia dentata</i>) Bigleaf Goldenray	3-4 feet	Yellow: mid-summer	✓	✓		Large, rounded leaves	✓	✓	
(<i>Ligularia stenocephala</i>) 'The Rocket'	4-5 feet	Yellow; early, mid-summer	✓			Large heart-shaped to triangular leaves;	✓	✓	
(<i>Lobelia cardinalis</i>) Cardinal Flower	2-4 feet	Red; Aug-Sept	✓	✓			✓	✓	Good as cut flowers. Short lived perennial that self sows.
(<i>Mertensia virginica</i>) Virginia Bluebells	1-2 feet	Blue; April-May	✓	✓			✓		Foliage dies back after flowering.
(<i>Monarda didyma</i>) Bee balm	2-3 feet	Several; July-Aug	✓				✓		Tends to spread. Powdery mildew common, (look for resistant cultivars
(<i>Phlox divaricata</i>) Blue Phlox	1-2 feet	Blue; May-June	✓	✓	✓		✓		Powdery mildew can be a problem.
(<i>Physostegia virginiana</i>) Obedient Plant	3-4 feet	Lavender; July-Aug	✓				✓	✓	Easy to grow; can become aggressive.
(<i>Podophyllum peltatum</i>) Mayapple	12-18 inches	White; May-June	✓	✓	✓	Umbrella-like foliage	✓	✓	Can grow aggressively. This plant has poisonous parts.
(<i>Polemonium caeruleum</i>) Jacob's Ladder	1-2 feet	Blue; May-July	✓			Ladder-like foliage	✓		Does well in woodland conditions.
(<i>Polygonatum biflorum</i>) Solomon's Seal	1-3 feet	White; May-June	✓	✓	✓	Blue berries late in the season	✓		Spreads slowly under ground.
(<i>Pulmonaria saccharata</i>) Bethlehem Sage	8-12 inches	Blue or pink; May	✓	✓	✓	Attractive, spotted foliage	✓		Several cultivars available.
(<i>Rodgersia aesculifolia</i>) Fingerleaf Rodgersia	3-5 feet	White; late spring-midsummer	✓	✓		Horsechestnut-like foliage	✓	✓	

(<i>Sanguinaria canadensis</i>) Bloodroot	6-10 inches	White; March-May	✓	✓	✓	Deeply lobed foliage	✓			Can also grow in full sun.
(<i>Smilacina racemosa</i>) False Solomon's Seal	1-3 feet	White; May-July	✓	✓	✓	Red berries in summer	✓			Looks like true Solomon's Seal, but has different flowers.
(<i>Stylophorum diphyllum</i>) Celandine Poppy	10-15 inches	Yellow; April-May	✓	✓		Lobed foliage	✓			Self sows.
(<i>Tiarella cordifolia</i>) Foamflower	6-12 inches	White; May-June	✓	✓	✓	Attractive foliage	✓			Many cultivars with interesting foliage are available.
(<i>Tradescantia</i> species) Spiderwort	1-2 ½ feet	Pink, blue, white; May-June	✓				✓	✓		Cut plant back in midsummer to keep it tidy and encourage new growth.
(<i>Tricyrtis formosana</i>) Formosa Toad Lily	2 feet	Pink; Sept-Oct	✓				✓			Flowers resemble tiny orchids.
(<i>Tricyrtis hirta</i>) Hairy Toad Lily	2-3 feet	Lavender; Sept-Oct	✓				✓			Flowers resemble tiny orchids.
(<i>Trillium grandiflorum</i>) Large Flowered Trillium	6-18 inches	White; April-June	✓	✓	✓	Leaves in sets of three	✓			Flowers change to pink as they age.
(<i>Uvularia grandiflora</i>) Bellwort, Merry Bells	12-18 inches	Yellow; April-May	✓	✓	✓		✓			Prefers neutral to alkaline soils.
(<i>Viola</i> species) Violets	4-10 inches	Purple, white, yellow; April-June	✓	✓	✓	Heart shaped leaves	✓			Violets are very adaptable to a variety of light levels and soil types; aggressive under ideal conditions

Vines

(<i>Aristolochia macrophylla</i>) Dutchman's Pipe	20-30 feet	Greenish yellow; May-June	✓	✓		Heart shaped foliage	✓			Twining vine.
(<i>Hydrangea anomala</i> subsp. <i>petiolaris</i>) Climbing Hydrangea	50-60 feet	White; June-July	✓	✓	✓	Crisp foliage and yellow fall color	✓			Prune in winter or early spring to remove neglected vines or those not flowering well. Clinging vine.
(<i>Parthenocissus quinquefolia</i>) Virginia Creeper	50-60 feet	Greenish; June-July	✓	✓	✓	Attractive foliage; red fall color	✓			Clinging vine.
(<i>Parthenocissus tricuspidata</i>) Boston Ivy	50-60 feet	Greenish; June-July	✓	✓	✓	Attractive foliage; red fall color	✓			Clinging vine.

Ornamental Grasses										
(<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i> <i>bulbosum</i> 'Variegatum') Bulbous Oat Grass	6-12 inches (1-2 feet in flower)	Silver to tan; May-June	✓			Striped foliage	✓			Cool season, clumping grass
(<i>Chasmanthium latifolium</i>) Northern Sea Oats	2-3 feet (3-4 feet in flower)	Green; late summer	✓			Bamboo like foliage and drooping flat seed heads.	✓			Warm season, clumping grass
(<i>Deschampsia caespitosa</i>) Tufted Hairgrass	1-3 feet (3-4 feet in flower)	Green; May-June	✓	✓	✓	Tan foliage in fall	✓			Cool season, clumping grass
(<i>Festuca ovina</i> 'Glaucia') Blue Fescue	12-18 inches	Green; June-July	✓			Blue green foliage; often evergreen	✓			Easy to grow from seed, but intensity of blue color will vary quite a bit; buy named varieties for uniform color.
(<i>Hakonechloa macra</i>) Hakone Grass	12-18 inches tall	Green; late summer	✓	✓			✓			May be borderline hardy in zone 5. Cool season, clumping grass.
(<i>Hystrix patula</i>) Bottlebrush Grass	8-12 inches (2-3 feet in flower)	Green; June-August	✓				✓			Plants will self sow and can be used for naturalizing. Cool season, clumping grass.
Shrubs										
(<i>Clethra alnifolia</i>) Summersweet Clethra	4-8 feet	White; July-August	✓	✓		Yellow to mild orange fall color	✓	✓		Salt tolerant. Flowers are fragrant.
(<i>Cornus mas</i>) Corneliancherry Dogwood	20-25 feet	Yellow; April	✓			Cherry red fruit in summer; mottled bark	✓			This species can be used as either a large shrub or a small tree.
(<i>Corylopsis</i> species) Fragrant Winterhazel	8-15 feet	Light yellow; April	✓			Yellow fall color	✓			Because this shrub flowers early, it is prone to frost damage.
(<i>Fothergilla gardenii</i>) Dwarf Fothergilla	2-3 feet	White; April-May	✓			Fall color red, orange and purple	✓			Best flowering and autumn color will occur in full sun.
(<i>Hamamelis vernalis</i>) Vernal Witchhazel	6-10 feet	Yellow; March-April	✓	✓		Dark green foliage; fall color is yellow	✓	✓		Tolerant of alkaline soils.
(<i>Hydrangea arborescens</i>) Smooth Hydrangea	3-5 feet	White; June-Sept	✓	✓	✓	Mild yellow fall color in some years	✓			
(<i>Hydrangea quercifolia</i>) Oakleaf Hydrangea	3-6 feet	White; June-July	✓	✓		Attractive, oak-like leaves; fall color is russet-red	✓			Flower clusters will dry on the plant for a lasting effect.
(<i>Hypericum prolificum</i>) Shrubby St. Johnswort	3-4 feet	Yellow; July-Aug	✓			Blue green summer foliage	✓	✓	✓	Tolerates alkaline soils.

(<i>Ilex verticillata</i>) Winterberry	6-9 feet	Flowers not showy	✓		Bright red fruit in winter; mild yellow fall color	✓	✓		All <i>Ilex</i> have male and female flowers on separate plants. Fruit on females if a male plant is available to pollinate
(<i>Lindera benzoin</i>) Spicebush	6-12 feet	Yellow; April	✓	✓	✓	Red berries on female plants in late summer and autumn; fall color is yellow	✓	✓	Since male and female flowers are on separate plants, both are needed to produce the bright red berries (berries will be produced on female plant).
(<i>Mahonia aquifolium</i>) Oregon Grapeholly	3-6 feet	Yellow; April	✓	✓	✓	Evergreen leaves; blue-black, non-edible fruits in summer; leaves turn purplish in winter	✓		The evergreen leaves may scorch in dry, windy sites or during dry winters.
(<i>Myrica pensylvanica</i>) Bayberry	6-12 feet	Flowers not showy	✓		Dark green aromatic foliage, gray, waxy berries on female plants	✓	✓	✓	Since male and female flowers are on separate plants, both are needed to produce the waxy berries (berries will be produced on female plant only).
(<i>Rhododendron catawbiense</i>) Catawba Rhododendron	6-12 feet	Several colors; April and May	✓	✓		Evergreen leaves	✓		Alkaline soils will lead to chlorosis (yellowing) of the leaves; winter sun and wind can be damaging to the evergreen foliage.
(<i>Rhus aromatica</i>) Fragrant Sumac	3-8 feet	Flowers not showy	✓	✓	Shiny green leaves; red fruit on female plants; excellent fall color	✓		✓	Male and female flowers on separate plants. Fruit will be produced only if a male plant is available to pollinate
(<i>Symphoricarpos albus</i>) Common Snowberry	3-6 feet	Pink; June	✓	✓	White fruit, September-November	✓			Due to high incidence of disease and vigorous suckering, this shrub tends to require high maintenance.
(<i>Taxus</i> species) Yew	Cultivars available in shrub-like sizes	Flowers not showy	✓	✓	✓	Evergreen foliage; red fruit on female plants	✓		Poorly drained soils can be very damaging to yews.
(<i>Viburnum carlesii</i>) Koreanspice Viburnum	4-6 feet	White; May	✓		Fruit change from red to black; fall color is wine red	✓			Flowers are extremely fragrant.
(<i>Viburnum dentatum</i>) Arrowwood Viburnum	6-12 feet	White; May	✓		Small, dark blue fruits in late summer; fall color is reddish	✓	✓	✓	Flower fragrance is slightly unpleasant.