



Gardening in Dry Shade

I am fortunate to have gardens in both sun and shade. Many years ago, I spent more time in my sunny gardens tanning my back while planting, weeding, and mulching. As I get older, I find myself heading for the cooler spots in my landscape. Those areas sheltered from the hot summer sun serve as a welcoming retreat.

But the Silver Maples responsible for the respite from the sun's heat rob surrounding plants of available moisture. They have many roots that compete for precious rainwater. Even with supplemental watering, it has been difficult to find plants that will thrive in this hostile environment. But over the years, I have found several plants that perform well in dry shade.

Shrubs

Japanese kerria (*Kerria japonica*) is indispensable if you are gardening in dry shade. It grows about 4 feet tall in my garden. Golden yellow flowers bloom for three weeks in mid-spring and continue sporadically through the summer. Bright green stems shine in the winter garden. It spreads slowly by suckers so

give this shrub some room to grow. I have enough property to have gardens in both sun and shade. Many years ago, I spent more time in my sunny gardens tanning my back while planting, weeding, and mulching. As I get older, I find myself heading for the cooler spots in my landscape. Those areas sheltered from the hot summer

Yews (*Taxus*) play an important role in my landscape. Poor yews...they've gotten such a bad rap – not because they are bad plants, but because people have placed them poorly. Sited appropriately, they contribute needed structure, a sense of permanence, and winter color. Their short, flat needles are dark green on top and lighter green underneath. New foliage in spring is bright green.

Perennials

Lady's mantle (*Alchemilla mollis*) is a must-have perennial. It forms a 12 to 18-inch tall mound of beautiful, velvety soft green leaves that catch and hold droplets of rain. Chartreuse flowers make long-lasting cut flowers. Lady's mantle sometimes self-seeds in my garden, so I get some babies for free.

False forget-me-not (*Brunnera macrophylla*) may be my favorite perennial for dry shade. Clouds of blue forget-me-not flowers cover the 12-inch plant from late April to early June – six weeks of flowers! Choose the all green variety or try one of the new variegated varieties: Dawson's White, Jack Frost or Mr. Morse.

Barrenwort (*Epimedium versicolor* 'Sulphureum') slowly spreads to form a wonderful mat of heart-shaped semi-evergreen foliage that is tinted red in spring. Yellow star-like flowers appear in April and May. This is a small plant only reaching 9 inches tall.



Epimedium versicolor 'Sulphureum' grows happily in dry shade.

Giant Solomon's Seal (*Polygonatum giganteum*) adds architecture to a border with their arching stems that grow 3 feet tall. They have spread to form a large colony in my garden.

White bell-shaped flowers bloom in my landscape. Beacon Silver evergreen mat up to 12 inches in May and June, and blue has dark pink flowers over silvery wide. In April to May, Pink Ridge berries appear in fall. If this plant -white foliage; White Nancy has has dark mauve-pink flowers. is too tall for your garden, plant white flowers over similar foliage; The flowers of Sherwood Purple Smooth Solomon's Seal Beedham's White has white are lavender-blue.

(*Polygonatum biflorum*) flowers over yellow foliage; and instead. This year I am adding Anne Greenaway has mauve Lily-of-the-Valley (*Convallaria Variegated Solomon's Seal.* flowers over foliage that is a *majalis*) is an old-fashioned blend of dark green, pale green, favorite. Enjoy the fragrant, white chartreuse and silver. flowers in the garden or in a vase. Give this one room to roam

Grasses

Bottle Brush Grass (*Hystrix patula*) is a clump forming, upright grass that grows up to 3 feet tall. It has pink, bottlebrush flowers from June through July. This is one of the few grasses that actually prefer dry shaded conditions.



Beacon Silver Lamium grows well in dry shade.

– even under the stress of dry shade, it is vigorous.

If you have given up gardening under thirsty-rooted trees, consider giving it another try. There are plenty of plants from which to choose that will perform admirably.

Groundcovers

Spotted deadnettle (*Lamium* Creeping Phlox (*Phlox maculatum*) cover lots of ground *stolonifera*) forms a dense,