Shade Plants for the Landscape

Shade gardens can be an area of the garden that lacks the color and flare that sun gardens often have. Some of the most overlooked plants can add the most color and interest.

Shade plants for height

Plants that give height are often the hardest to find! While the list is not long of hardy shade plants for height, there are some great options that will add a unique spark to your garden.

- Aralia – the bright chartreuse/yellow leaves of the aralia brighten up the darkest of shade gardens. This perennial can reach up to 6 feet depending on variety and is hardy to zone 3!
- Dogwood – while dogwood typically grows in sun, this versatile plant can be planted in shade. Dogwood varieties can range from pure green leaves to variegated or chartreuse. Height ranges from 2'–10'.
- Clethra – a beautiful and overlooked shrub that grows 3–6'. This shrub can also be planted in sun, so it is very versatile. The flowers are large clusters of fragrant white flowers.

Shade plants for foliage

Plants that are primarily grown for their foliage are some of the most popular shade perennials.

- Hostas – extremely popular with a variety of variegation on the leaves in colors primarily of green to yellow. The flowers are pretty and showy. Some varieties can grow to 6+' wide.
- Heuchera – slightly smaller plants than hosta with foliage colors ranging from purple to red to orange. The small bell flowers add additional color to the plant. Most varieties are 12"–2' in width and height before flower stalks.



Shade plants with flowers

- Turtlehead – this plant loves a shady location. The flowers show color in late summer and resemble a turtle's head. The glossy green foliage is attractive when the plant is not in flower. The plant can grow 2' tall depending on variety.
- Astilbe – an extremely popular flowering shade plant. The flowers emerge in early to mid summer in shades of white, pink and red. Height ranges from 12" to 3'. This is a great option for summer shade color.
- Goatsbeard – similar to astilbe but with only a creamy white flower option. The feathery flower shows color in early summer. The plant, depending on variety, grows to about 2'.