



DEFEAT SHADE IN YOUR LANDSCAPE WITH SHADE-LOVING PLANTS

By Dr. Robert Moon

We all face similar challenges in our landscapes. As landscape trees mature, they can shade out all the sun-loving plants beneath their canopies. When this happens, your landscape may become empty and unattractive. This reduction in sunlight begins gradually, and plants show symptoms such as decreased vigor, leggy growth, stretching toward the light, yellowing leaves, thinning leaf tissue, and, eventually, plant death. Many of you are dealing with these issues. To avoid a barren landscape, homeowners often turn to rock, decomposed granite, pavers, and mulch. However,

this doesn't solve the problem of incorporating plants to soften the landscape. The good news is that it's possible to grow plants in this shade, and they can be beautiful and appealing. Shade-tolerant plants can add texture and color variation to your outdoor space.

If it's time for a landscape renovation in your yard, consider hiring a landscape professional for advice. If you're a do-it-yourselfer, research shade-loving plants and choose those that will look good in your yard. Before purchasing, prepare the soil by adding 1 to 2 inches of compost or organic matter from a lightweight potting soil, and mix it into the existing soil. Then, fertilize with 1 pound of a complete fertilizer, such as 10-10-10, per 100 square feet, or follow the application instructions on the bag. You can also plant in containers or raised beds if that's easier for you.

The plants listed serve as a starting point for your research, making the process of improving your landscape engaging and rewarding as you discover what best fits your yard.

ANNUAL COLOR:

Annuals provide quick results, but they last only one growing season and need to be replanted each year.

- **Caladiums** – these annuals feature a wide range of colors and textures. They can be planted from tubers or container plants. These exotic, large-leafed, multi-colored shade lovers can quickly add beauty.
- **Coleus** – another group of shade-loving plants known for their beautiful leaves. There is a wide range of colors and leaf patterns. These plants spread quickly when you pinch back the growing terminal on the stem, which encourages side branches to grow.
- **Begonias** – known for thriving in shaded areas. You can choose from green or bronze foliage, complemented by white, pink, or red flowers. These plants tend to spread more quickly when you pinch off the growing tips on the stems, which encourages side branches to develop.
- **Impatiens** – these plants thrive in shade and come in many colors. They look great in either solid-color groups or mixed palettes.



UNDERSTORY TREES: If you need an understory tree to add interest to your landscape, research the following trees based on your specific shade conditions-whether deep shade or partial shade-to ensure they will thrive in your yard's light environment. Consider options like- *Japanese Maple, Redbud, and Dogwood* (pictured in order below)

Other options: *Saucer Magnolia, Star Magnolia, Mexican Plum, or Possumhaw Holly*



SHRUBS:

These shade-loving shrubs are worth considering for your landscape- Aralia, Camellia, and Azaleas (pictured in order below)

Other options: *Leopard Plant, Hosta Lily, Encore, Podocarpus, Nandina, Fern, Turk's Cap, Hydrangea, Dwarf Palmetto, or Mahonia*



GROUND COVER:

Consider shade-loving ground cover for your larger shaded areas– Asian Jasmine, English Ivy, Big Blue Liriope (pictured in order below)

Other options: Texas Gold Columbine, Japanese Forest Grass, Inland Sea Oats, Fern, Lily of the Valley, Vinca, Phlox, Blue Mist Flowers, Coral Bells, Toad Lily, or Louisiana Iris



The list above is just a starting point that includes some of the top options. There are many shade-loving plants. Enjoy researching and choosing the ones that suit your landscape best, and have fun gardening!



 **Prepping your Landscape for Arctic Cold** 

In Texas, extended freezing temperatures can damage tender, unacclimated plants. Protect them by keeping the soil moist before cold weather arrives.

Since rain may not be enough. Water all plants, especially new ones, and turf before cold weather, as hydrated plants survive freezes better. Moist soil traps and radiates heat to plants, offering frost protection. This simple step can make a big difference in plant survival.

Water early and turn off irrigation during freezes. For extra protection, cover plants with fabric (not plastic) during extended cold, and remove covers once temperatures rise to prevent disease.





WINTER PREP CHECKLIST

- Drain and remove outdoor hoses.
- Cover outdoor faucets with insulated protectors.
- Apply Neem Oil.
- Monitor the weather for any major freeze events and run irrigation 24-48 hours before freezing temperatures to provide a thorough soaking to turf and beds.
- Turn your irrigation system OFF except to provide extra water BEFORE going into a freeze.
- Add a layer of mulch to beds and trees rings for additional insulation.



NEEM OIL

Apply Neem Oil until it's running off plants for the control of overwintering insects and diseases

**Follow all label instructions





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