

MARGO ROTEN
Master Gardener

Question: Our new home has a very shaded porch area so I am unable to use any of the flowers I love and have used every year to make a colorful, inviting display. I need suggestions on what plants to use in containers for this area. Also, any different display ideas?

Answer: I think it is more difficult to find colorful shade plants simply because we are more likely to need plants for a sunny or partially sunny location, and are more used to seeing and using those.

You will be overjoyed to learn of the wide variety of colorful annuals and perennials there are to choose from. Not only shade-loving colorful flowers, but also many other plants where the foliage is sometimes more beautiful and colorful than the flowers it produces.

Some of my favorite combinations are the purple Coleus with the lime greens of the Creeping Jenny. Another stunning combination is purple Heuchera with Maidenhair Ferns.

Remember that some plants come in varieties that take sun to full-shade, so when selecting your plant be sure you have chosen the correct variety for where you will be using it.

Plants prized for their beautiful foliage include: Maidenhair Fern (*Adiantum capillus-veneris*), Coleus (*Coleus blumei*), Caladium (*Araceae* family), Hosta (*Asparagaceae* family), Heuchera (*Saxifragaceae* family), Smoke Tree (*Anacardiaceae* family), Aucuba (*Aucuba japonica*), Creeping Jenny (*Lysimachia nummularia*), and Japanese Forest Grass (*Hakonechloa mara*).

I have given some plants with the common name and the botanical name for that particular plant as it is particularly suited to the shade. The plants where I have only given the common name and family name indicate a choice of several varieties in many different colors and suited for different sun levels. You can select the one of the many that will work for your location.

Some great choices are flowers that thrive in shade: Primrose (*Primula vulgaris*), Hydrangeas (*Hydrangeaceae* Family), Astilbes (these pair



PHOTO COURTESY OF MINNEHAHA MASTER GARDENERS

Master Gardener Margo Roten likes pairing purple Coleus with the lime greens of Creeping Jenny.

Colorful plants and quirky ideas for a shady porch



Margo Roten
Ask a Master Gardener

well with Hostas and Helleboreas, Campanula – also called bellflower (*Campanulaceae* family), Bleeding Hearts (*Dicentra spectabilis*), Foxgloves (*Plantaginaceae*), Fushias and Jacob's Ladder.

If you do select Jacob's Ladder for your garden, it is best to use the *Polemonium caeruleum* variety as this was developed specifically for use in gardens. The wild variety, *Polemonium reptans*, is considered

a threatened species.

In addition to potting your selections in urns, pots or a hanging planter, consider displaying them in new, unexpected ways. I have seen lovely displays of plants in a picture frame that was modified to hold dirt and plants. This arrangement is then displayed on an easel or propped up on an angle.

An old ladder is another unconventional but cute way to display many plants in a vertical space.

Old water buckets, crocks and old copper pots will give a charming feel to any display. Use a small old tire planted with colorful and trailing plants hung upright as a wreath. An old highchair,

discarded windows or drawers, water troughs, old punch bowls – let your imagination take over!

A trip to the thrift store can aid your search for unusual items to use in your design and can be had for a great price. Have fun designing your new porch!

Do you have a gardening or insect question? Contact the Douglas County Master Gardeners at douglasmg@oregonstate.edu or 541-672-4461 or visit 1134 SE Douglas Ave., Roseburg. Douglas County Master Gardeners are trained volunteers who help the OSU Extension Service serve the people of Douglas County.



METRO CREATIVE SERVICES

Consider displaying your flowers and planters in new, unexpected ways. An old ladder is an unconventional but cute way to display many plants in a vertical space.