

The beauty of a shaded garden



Margo Roten
Master Gardener

Question: I love a lush garden with over-flowing, brightly-colored flowers but most of my yard is very shady. Is this look hopeless?

Answer: Certainly not. Many shade plants are quite lush. In fact, some of the lushest gardens I have seen are shade gardens. You will be pleasantly surprised at how many choices of brightly colored flowers you will have. Those, combined with the lushness and variety of the foliage available to you, will produce a garden that you, I am sure, will be quite happy with.

First, let us deal with color. For beautiful pink or blue blooms all summer long try true geraniums – not the annual ones you use in sunny areas those are actually pelargoniums. True geraniums do well in partial shade. Also, for more variety consider: hardy fuchsias, impatiens, several types of hydrangea, rhododendron, Astilbes, and Forget-me-nots to name just a very few. You will have fun finding and choosing your favorites. Also, many ground covers have lovely, tiny flowers that contrast beautifully with their very dense foliage.

Flowers are not the only way to add color to your garden. There are several plants where the leaves are more spectacular than the flowers. One you may want to consider is the coleus plant. The leaves are not only beautiful shades of purples, pinks and greens in different combinations but they are also in several different shapes. Many Hostas and other shade loving plants come in an unimaginable range of greens, whites, yellows, purples; some with variegated leaves. The foliage on some shade loving plants are a beautiful and bright yellow-green and can be used in the shadiest corner for some brightness.

One absolute must for a shade garden are ferns. Some to consider: Cinnamon Fern, Lady Fern, Maiden Hair Fern, Leatherwood Fern and the



PHOTOS COURTESY OF PIXABAY

A blue hydrangea, which is one of many plants that can thrive in a shaded garden.



Hosta, a green, leafy plant perfect for living in shade.

Ghost Fern (Athyrium). Many plant wholesalers and others will select a few for you and package them as a Native Fern Mix or something similar. The Ghost Fern is said to give off a slight glow or iridescence at night. Talk about adding interest in your garden!

An important detail for shade gardens is the size of the blooms on the plants that flower. If the

flowers are small, arrange them in drifts, of all the same color. This is very striking and will give the flowers more impact.

Other ways to add color to your shade garden are brightly colored pots, shiny metal pots or a metal sculpture or sphere.

Since you are a fan of the lush look, plant lots of plants and a wide variety. Avoid straight lines in your design for a more



Hosta blue, another variety of the shade-loving plant.

natural “unplanned” look. Remember to choose plants to compliment and/or to contrast with the others around it.

The last item I would add to your garden is a comfy chair and small table. That way, when the hot days of summer arrive you can retreat to your lush, cool shade garden with a good book and your favorite summer beverage. Enjoy!

Do you have a gardening question? Please e-mail, call, or visit the Douglas County Master Gardeners Plant Clinic at douglasmg@oregonstate.edu, 541-236-3052, or 1134 S.E. Douglas Ave., Roseburg. Douglas County Master Gardeners are trained volunteers who help the OSU Extension Service serve the people of Douglas County.