

Heart-shaped plant options



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Bleeding Hearts, also known as bishop's hoods, are perfect for shade gardens. They are resistance to deer and rabbits and attract pollinators.

Question: It's almost Valentine's Day and I would like to surprise my sweetie with a plant or tree that would feature heart-shaped leaves or flowers. Do you have any recommendations?

Answer: There are a number of botanicals that might suit your suitor. I'll give you five that might "warm your heart".

Bleeding Hearts have pink or red blossoms that look like hearts or resemble bishop's hoods (which is another common name for them). They can be found growing wild in the forest or can be found in garden catalogues as well. *Dicentra eximia* is the native North American bleeding heart and thrives in shady, moist environments.

Many new hybrids have been developed such as King of Hearts, Ivory Hearts or Aurora. Perfect for shade gardens, they pair well with ferns and hostas. Another plus is their resistance to deer and rabbits, as well as attracting. Bleeding Hearts spread naturally by rhizomes and can be propagated by root cuttings and division.

Forest Pansy Redbud Tree (*Cercis canadensis*): This



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gorgeous flowering deciduous tree sports beautiful purple, heart-shaped leaves, and is a cultivar of the common Eastern redbud tree. Often multi-trunked and perfect as a smaller landscape tree, the pansy redbud also has showy pink flowers that appear in early spring.

can be grown outdoors or also found as a houseplant. Native to the Mediterranean region, cyclamen have been bred to produce diversity in form and size, with many flowers available in shades of red, pink, purple and white. Look for the houseplant variety in any garden center. Pick one that has only a few flowers open with many buds forming at the plant base for emerging flowers.

Overwatering is a common problem with caring for your indoor cyclamen. They do well in a self-watering container, the kind designed for

African violets, with a porous clay pot nested inside a glazed pot. They grow from tubers which hold water and nutrients during their dormant summer period. Leaves turn yellow as the weather warms, indicating the plant is going into its dormant season.

At this point, cease watering the cyclamen and it should resume growth in the fall as temperatures cool and you resume watering. They do best in a cool, bright location indoors, no warmer than 68 degrees, avoiding drafts. Remove flowers as they fade to promote new blooms.

Ginger, (*Asarum virginicum*), is a native herbaceous perennial in the Birthwort family. You can find wild ginger growing along streams in hardwood forests. Evergreen, with a slender creeping rhizome, ginger prefers organic-rich, acidic soil in full or partial shade. Their mottled, heart-shaped leaves are the main attraction – their unusual flowers are often hidden from view under the leaves.

As a ground cover in a shaded woodland garden, it is best to plant them in groups for more visual impact and up front so



PHOTO BY BONNIE COURTER

Perfect as a smaller landscape tree, the Forest Pansy Redbud tree has purple, heart-shaped leaves and sprouts pink flowers in early spring.

as not to compete with taller plants. Ginger is perfect in shaded rock gardens, as a low border or planted around the bases of trees.

Devil's Ivy (*Epipremnum aureum*). This hanging houseplant displays glossy, green or variegated leaves on cascading stems. (This disparaging common name is probably due to its poisonous leaves if they are ingested). Well-suited for hanging baskets, its climbing vines can grow as long as 40 feet! Simply give the vines a prune to keep it at the desired length.

Devil's Ivy can survive long periods of low light, but does well even beside a well-lit sunny window. Be careful not to overwater. Keep the soil moist, but let it dry out in between watering. Leaves enjoy an occasional wipe down to remove any collected dust.

I hope I've helped in your amorous quest to impress your Valentine.

Do you have a gardening question? Please email the Douglas County Master Gardener Plant Clinic at douglasmg@oregonstate.edu.