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Selecting plants for the Shade Garden important

By Grace C. Lockwood

Before deciding on what to plant in a shade garden, you must determine the type of shade there is across the garden. This can range from deep shade beneath evergreens and large trees, filtered shade with sunlight flickering through leaves overhead, light shade to various degrees of partial shade such as east and west exposures.

Also remember that the afternoon sun is stronger than the morning sun so you can try sun-loving plants

along a west exposure. Plants listed as for partial shade such as daylilies (Hemerocallis) and bee balm (Monarda didyma) will do well in morning sun.

You can often tell a shade plant by looking at the leaves. A sun loving plant will have thick, fleshy leaves like sedum or small, narrow leaves to con-

serve water. The leaves often have small hairs or a fuzzy covering and may be grey or silver in color to reflect the sun's rays.

A shade plant will have large, thin, smooth leaves, often dark green, to absorb as much light as possible. They often overlap each other to create their own shade while

a sun lover's leaves will be arranged in whorls so each leaf catches some sun. Shade plants often make good city plants as well because soot and grime washes off easily in the rain.

Three indispensable plants for the shade garden are the hostas, ferns and mosses. Hostas range in size from the tiny "Thumb Nail" with leaves only 1" long to the giant "Blue Umbrellas" and Hosta montana "Aureo-marginata" which cover one square metre per plant. The leaves are bright to dark green, blue-green and some plants have silver and gold variegated leaves. There is a hosta for every location. Generally the variegated varieties like a bit more sun.

A bonus are the spikes of lavender or white scented flowers in midsummer.

Ferns also range in size from less than 1/2 meter to over two metres in height but all have delicate foliage that contrasts well with the broad leaved hostas. There are even evergreen shield ferns (Dryopteris dilatata & marginalis) that provide winter color and material for Christmas decorations. These ferns are native to eastern North America. There are also more exotic Japanese painted ferns in shades of bronze, pinkish, silver and gold.

Mosses can be used to form a luxuriant green carpet where grass won't grow and where it won't be walked on too often. Moss also gives garden sculptures a soft patina of age. Moisture is the key element in establishing a cover of moss. Thoroughly soak the soil, press the moss into the soil and keep moist until established.

Garden sculptures etc. can be painted with a mixture of one part buttermilk to seven parts water with dried moss all blended together.

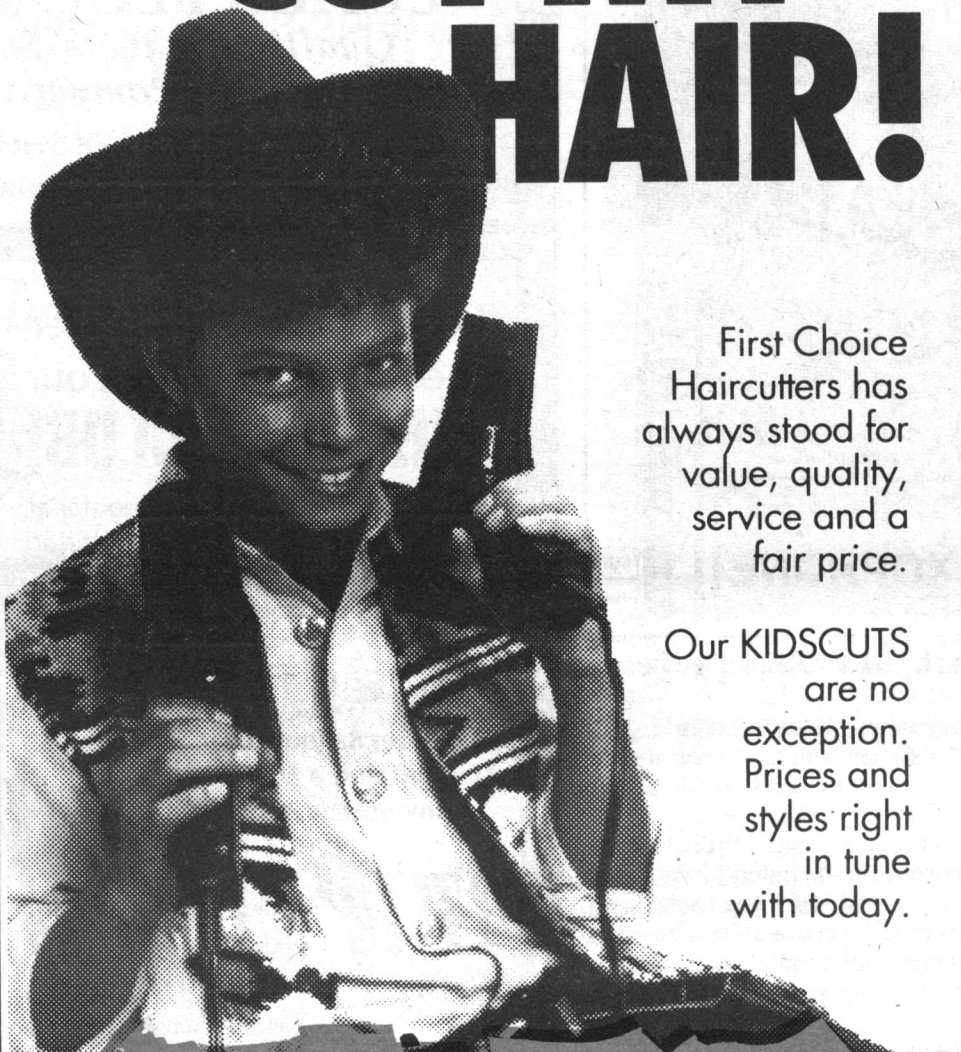
Shade loving flowers include impatiens, begonias, primulas, all native woodland plants and early bulbs which bloom before the leaves come out. Partial shade allows a much wider range of flowers including columbines, daylilies, lilies, astilbe, geraniums (pelargoniums and true geraniums), rugosa roses, goatsbeard for moist soil and many others. Trees and shrubs include hemlock, cedar, boxwood, yews, Oregon grape (Mahonia), viburnums, hydrangeas, summer sweet (Clethra) and daphnes.

There are several good books out now on shade gardens so if you are interested in creating a shady oasis, check out your local libraries.



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