

Harvest a Healthy Lifestyle

Mushrooms can sprout in all shapes and sizes on your lawn. As a child, you might have enjoyed plucking little toad stools.

A gardener is often less fascinated by mushrooms which call moist, shady spots in the garden home, and sees mushrooms as a nuisance. However, he or she might want to rethink that notion, and actually cultivate edible mushrooms in the garden. Why? Because they are a healthy source of nutrients and may help treat common ailments.

Mushrooms can boost immune system functions, aid in relieving allergies and arthritis, speed recovery from stomach and cervical cancer, remove toxins and dissolve fat, according to MyBackyard.com. Here are three easy-to-find examples and their apparent health benefits:



White Button Mushrooms

High in zinc, which is essential for maintenance of normal white blood cells and other immune functions.

Rich in the oxygenating element, germanium.

Shiitake Mushrooms

Contain properties that have been shown to dissolve fat.

Help lower blood-cholesterol levels.

May aid in recovery from stomach and cervical cancer.

Reishi Mushrooms

Anti-inflammatory properties help relieve allergies and arthritis.

May aid in cancer prevention.

May help to ease insomnia if consumed close to bed time.

Many Faces of Shade in the Garden

Not all plants thrive in a sun-filled environment. In fact, many including ferns, hostas and impatiens prefer the coolness of a shaded area. However, due to the varying angles of the sun throughout the course of a day, there are different kinds of shade which require individual types of maintenance to produce healthy plant life.

It is important to understand the particular shade types, their permanence and density when choosing plants that grow in differing light conditions. Here is a breakdown of the types of shade.

LIGHT AND DAPPLED SHADE

The two easiest shade conditions in which to raise plants are light and dappled shade. Even plants that are normally grown in sun may thrive in these types of shade, although they can become leggy as their stems grow tall in search of light.

Light shade is the type of permanent shade that is cast

by a building or wall on sites that are otherwise open to the sky. It also occurs at woodland edges or at the margins of a tree canopy.

Shade that occurs beneath deciduous vegetation will be dappled, forming a moving patchwork of varying intensities of shade that changes with the sun's daily movement.

PARTIAL SHADE

As the sun moves across the sky, a site with partial shade may receive between two and six hours of direct sun daily. This situation is ideal for plants that tolerate sun but little shade. In fact, only the most committed sun-loving plants fail to thrive in such conditions. The distinct advantage of partial shade is that it may alleviate the burning effects of midday or afternoon sun.

DEEP SHADE

This type of shade occurs beneath dense, evergreen trees or shrubs, at the base of high walls, or in passageways between tall

buildings and may be near-permanent if little or no direct sunlight strikes the site. If plants grow in deep shade cast by trees or shrub cover, they may also need to cope with poor, dry soil.

DRY SHADE

The most difficult garden situation for gardeners and plants alike is that of dry shade, which occurs in the rain shadow

of walls and beneath the canopy of dense or evergreen foliage, especially where shallow-rooting trees and shrubs are taking all of the moisture.

Relatively few plants are able to thrive in dry shade, which restricts the scope of planting designs, so it really helps to improve the dry soil with organic matter.

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Avoid a Slippery Slope in Your Backyard

Every backyard or garden area poses some challenges to the would-be landscaper. A shady spot, marshy area or wooded tract all require a certain measure of finesse when it comes to planting a garden. One problem area many homeowners encounter when planning a garden is a steep slope.

According to some ex-

perts, dealing with a steep slope can be one of the hardest tasks when it comes to garden design. Mowing a lawn on a slope can be treacherous, and plant borders are a challenge to weed.

There are ways to combat the slope problem in your design. One idea is to cut a wall in the slope bank to create a ledge, rather than a steep incline. This area

can be used as an upper lawn area or an elevated patio. Incorporating a stream into your design might give the slope a waterfall effect. However, drainage is key when it comes to planning around a hill. When it rains, you can expect runoff, therefore drainage holes at the foot of your design can catch the excess water.

If you are considering cutting into a bank, have a test dig before you finalize your plans to determine what you will be cutting into. If you must cut through rock and the like, you may need to rethink your plans to achieve a sensible solution.

Water will run off slopes very quickly, so be careful about plant selection. Plants that will tolerate drought conditions are best.

Water Trees and Shrubs Where They Need It Most

The summer's hot and dry conditions can place plants under extreme stress. During this time, it is critical to water plants thoroughly - especially new transplants. This can be difficult and costly, particularly in areas with watering restrictions in effect. Soaker hoses are an effective and cost-efficient way to help plants endure the harsh summer temperatures. A tree and shrub soaker ring is a perfect solution to watering individual plantings effectively with minimal damage to your wallet and the environment.

The ring provides control-

led watering directly to the roots at a rate ideal for plants to absorb. It also reduces water usage by up to 70 percent over traditional sprinkler systems. Water slowly seeps through tiny pores in the hose, going directly into the soil so it quickly reaches roots, providing the fastest

relief during hot, stressful days. And, keeping water away from foliage has a second benefit: water sprayed on leaves by traditional sprinkler systems can increase the spread of plant disease. Watering directly to the roots with a soaker hose greatly reduces that risk.



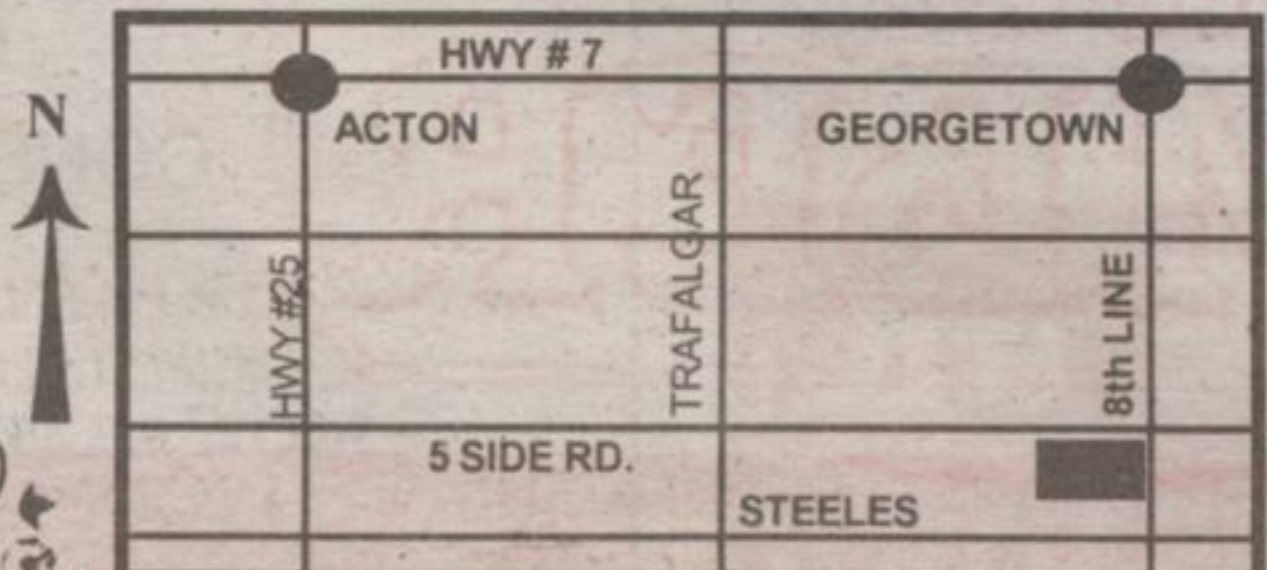
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