

Different plants need different degrees of shade to thrive

Many gardeners find shady gardens challenging, simply because fewer plants thrive in the shade than in the sun.

A woman who is just starting out gardening told me that she walks through the greenhouse choosing plants-I like that and that and that one-but then finds that all her choices need a sunny location. "What can I grow in the shade?" she implored.

Her question is common and not easily answered until we know how shady her garden is. There are different degrees of shade which determine what plants can be grown. If the shaded area receives almost no sunlight, for example, accept that nothing will grow well there. A mulch of white or a light-coloured rock can be used to brighten the area.

Most gardens are not shaded to that extreme. There may be other factors, however, which also limit what (or how) plants can be grown.

Dry, Shady Areas

Beside the old farmhouse where my husband Ted and I raised our family, large trees on the north side not only provided fairly dense shade but also blocked out rain. Our solution to planting in this dry, shaded area was to set out matching pots brimming over with bright tuberous begonias and trailing English ivy.

This solution also works well underneath evergreen trees, such as spruce, where the underlying soil will be not

only shaded and dry but also quite acidic.

Wet, Shady Areas

At the other extreme, when the shaded area is very moist, plant perennials such as astilbe, coltsfoot, meadowsweet or rayflower, which thrive in these conditions. Bog rosemary "Blue Ice" is a pretty perennial that produces pink flowers in May and June; its icy-blue foliage provides year-round colour.

Nolana is a blue-flowered annual that does well in partially shaded, wet areas. Mimulus, with its richly coloured, tubular flowers, is one of the most versatile annuals, growing well in wet locations and thriving in either full sun or full shade.

Very Shady Areas

Ferns and woodland perennials, such as bloodroot, trillium and jack-in-the-pulpit, take more shade than most other plants. Begonias and torenia withstand more shade than most other flowering annuals. As a groundcover, try goutweed, twinflower or bunchberry.

Certain wildflowers, including wild crocus, shooting star and the wild tiger lily, are well-suited to shady gardens. Astilbe, bleeding heart, hosta, ornamental grasses and primroses are perennials that are happiest with more shade than sun. Both gentians and pulmonaria will produce flowers of rich blue in this part

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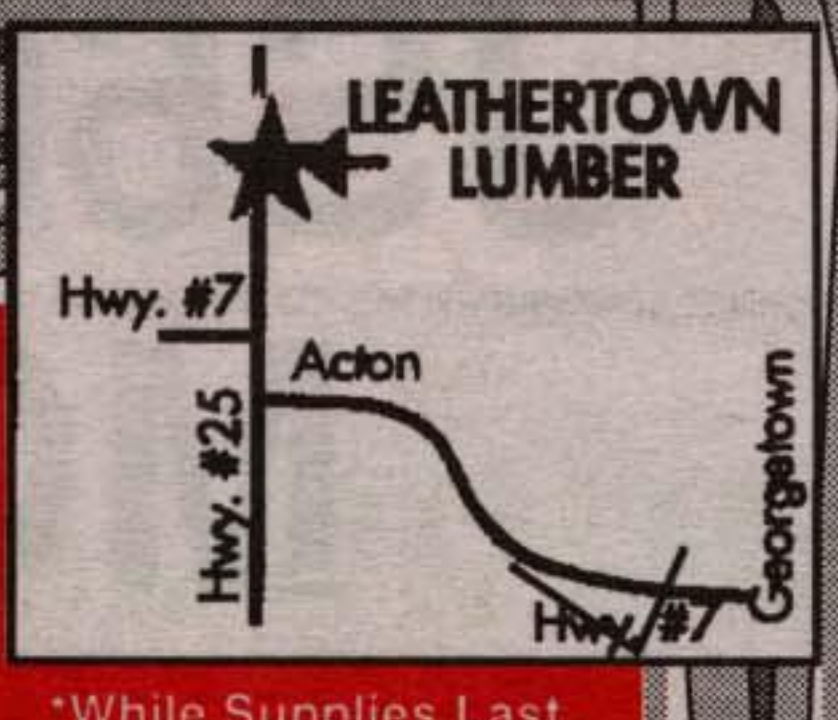
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