

Dry Shade Plants List

It's important to first assess the type of shade you are dealing with - not all shade is equal! There are varying degrees of shade; partial, dappled, bright indirect light, and full to deep shade. Typically plants preferring partial sun/shade conditions want morning sun and afternoon shade, especially in our hot/dry climate. A select few can tolerate the opposite - morning shade and late afternoon sun, or shade throughout the day with a few blasting hours in the middle. Part sun/shade loving plants placed in too much shade will grow thinner, leggier and will bloom less. Also consider other constraints like excessive needle/leaf drop that can smother daintier plants, rain shadows, drying winds and reflected heat. As with all drought tolerant plants, getting them established is crucial to longterm success. Just because they tolerate drier conditions doesn't mean you don't need to water them! Deep but infrequent soaks are the way to establish deep root systems that will hold up better in hot/dry weather. Some plants inherently have shallow root systems which, to our benefit, helps them adapt to areas with heavy root competition. These plants may require more frequent watering in the warmer months until they are well established. And remember - dry shade is one of the toughest conditions to garden in, so if your plants are less than vigorous it's par for the course!

**Notes plants that are tolerant of full shade (otherwise figure a few hours of morning sun would be preferable for better growth/bloom)

[Ferns](#) | [Grasses and Grass-like Plants](#) | [Perennials](#) | [Shrubs](#) | [Trees](#) | [Vines](#)

Botanical Name	Common Name	Comments
FERNS		
<i>Blechnum spicant</i>	Deer Fern	**Native
<i>Cyrtomium fortunei</i>	Hardy Holly Fern	**Bold, glossy foliage
<i>Dryopteris erythrosora</i>	Autumn Fern	**Coppery new growth
<i>Polystichum munitum</i>	Western Sword Fern	**Native
<i>Polystichum polyblepharum</i>	Tassel Fern	**
<i>Polystichum setiferum</i>	Alaska Fern	**Native
GRASSES AND GRASS-LIKE PLANTS		
<i>Carex glauca</i> 'Blue Zinger'	Blue Sedge	Ever-blue colonizer
<i>Carex pensylvanica</i>	Pennsylvania Sedge	No-mow woodland meadow
<i>Deschampsia caespitosa</i>	Tufted Hair Grass	Native, showy inflorescence
<i>Festuca californica</i>	California Fescue	CA Native, blue toned foliage, great under oaks
<i>Liriope</i> spp.	Lily Turf	**Purple blooms in fall. <i>L. spicata</i> is a creeping/colonizing species that would be most aggressive
<i>Ophiopogon japonica</i>	Japanese Mondo Grass	**Great en-masse, 'Dwarf' selection forms a carpet
<i>Reineckia carnea</i>	Chinese Reineckia	**Unique pink blooms in fall
PERENNIALS		
<i>Acanthus mollis/spinosus</i>	Bears Breech	Impressively tall flower spikes, bold foliage
<i>Ajuga reptans</i>	Bugleweed	Purple/blue flowers, many colorful foliage selections
<i>Asarum</i> spp.	Wild Ginger	**A few native species, plus others
<i>Aspidistra elatior</i>	Cast Iron Plant	**Bold foliage, tough disposition

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Bergenia spp.	Heartleaf Bergenia/Pigsqueak	Bold, glossy foliage
Brunnera macrophylla	Siberian Bugloss/Heartleaf Brunnera	**Early spring electric blue flowers
Ceratostigma plumbaginoides	Leadwort/Hardy Plumbago	Blue flowers in fall + burgundy fall color
Convallaria majalis	Lily of the Valley	**Toxic, there is a variegated form too!
Cyclamen coum, hederifolium	Hardy Cyclamen	**Blooms late winter/spring, beautiful foliage
Dicentra formosa	Fringed Bleeding Heart	**Native
Epimedium spp.	Bishop's Hat	**Exquisite foliage flowers, so many species and cultivars
Erigeron pulchellus	Robin's Plantain/Fleabane	'Lynhaven Carpet', mat forming Eastern Native, cute daisies
Euphorbia amygdaloides	Wood Spurge	'Purpurea' and E. v. robbiae - chartreuse flowers
Fragaria vesca	Wild Strawberry (Alpine)	**Alpine woodland native
Galium odoratum	Sweet Woodruff	Classic cottagey groundcover
Geranium spp. (like G. cantabrigiense and G. macrorrhizum)	Hardy Geranium	Scented species are usually deer resistant
Helleborus spp.	Lenten/ Christmas/Niger Rose	**Late winter blooming, evergreen
Hernaria glabra	Rupturewort	Great alternative to Irish/Scotch Moss
Heuchera spp. and hybrids	Coral Bells	Too many colorful options to count, hummers love red flowers
Hosta hybrids	Hosta	Stick w/green or blue leaf forms, get well established
Hypericum calycinum	St. John's Wort	Yellow flowers, aggressive groundcover
Iris chrysophylla, bracteata	Yellowleaf and Siskiyou Iris	Native, lovely spring ephemerals
Lamium maculatum	Dead nettle	
Lamiastrum g. 'Herman's Pride'	Yellow Archangel/Dead Nettle	Great frosted foliage
Lysimachia nummularia	Creeping Jenny	
Pachysandra terminalis	Japanese Pachysandra	**Evergreen ground cover
Polygonatum odoratum	Fragrant Solomon's Seal	**Beautiful foliage
Pulmonaria spp. and hybrids	Lungwort	Papery pink/blue flowers, spreading habit
Rubus calycinoides	Creeping Bramble/Raspberry	Tough!
Sedum s. 'Cape Blanco'	Stonecrop	Selection of native species, evergreen, great color
Stachys coccinea	Coral Hedgenettle	Fragrant foliage, attracts hummers
Vinca minor	Periwinkle	**Aggressive

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SHRUBS		
<i>Arbutus unedo</i> 'Compacta'	Compact Strawberry Tree	**Blooms and fruit ripens in fall
<i>Arctostaphylos</i> spp.	Manzanita	Many coastal species/selections tolerate part shade
<i>Aucuba japonica</i>	Japanese Aucuba	**
<i>Berberis darwinii</i>	Darwin's Evergreen Barberry	Great for wildlife
<i>Buxus</i> spp.	Boxwood	**
<i>Carpenteria californica</i>	Bush Anemone	Endemic to CA Sierra foothills, fragrant white blooms
<i>Ceanothus gloriosus</i>	Pt. Reyes Blue Blossom/Wild Lilac	Attracts pollinators/birds
<i>Cephalotaxus harringtonia</i>	Japanese Plum Yew	**
<i>Choisya ternata</i>	Mexican Orange	Fragrant flowers
<i>Cotoneaster dammeri</i>	Bearberry	
<i>Daphne</i> spp.	Daphne	Fragrant flowers
<i>Elaeagnus ebbingei</i> 'Gilt Edge'	Variegated Silverberry	**Fragrant flowers in fall, good wildlife plant
<i>Elaeagnus pungens</i> 'Clemson's Variegated' and 'Hosoba Fukurin'	Variegated Silverberry	Fragrant flowers in fall, good wildlife plant
<i>Euonymus fortunei</i>	Winter creeper	Many different variegated selections
<i>Fatsyhedera lizei</i>	Tree Ivy	**Unique hybrid, upright, trainable in tough spots
<i>Fatsia japonica</i>	Japanese Aralia	**Late fall blooms attract pollinators, tropical foliage
<i>Garrya elliptica</i> , <i>fremontii</i>	Silk-Tassel	Native, winter blooming
<i>Hebe</i> spp.	Hebe	Be sure to select only hardy species (Z 7)
<i>Holodiscus discolor</i>	Ocean Spray	Native, excellent for wildlife
<i>Hydrangea quersifolia</i>	Oakleaf Hydrangea	Toughest Hydrangea, Eastern native. Many seasons of interest - long lasting late summer blooms, fall color, peeling bark
<i>Ilex crenata</i>	Japanese Holly	**Attracts pollinators
<i>Ilex</i> spp.	Holly	
<i>Juniperus conferta</i>	Shore Juniper	Great color/texture, A-typical for the genus
<i>Kerria japonica</i>	Kerria	**Golden yellow blooms, green stems
<i>Mahonia</i> spp. (<i>M. aquifolium</i> , <i>M. nervosa</i> , <i>M. repens</i>)	Oregon Grape	**Native, great for wildlife
<i>Mahonia</i> hybrids	<i>Mahonia</i> (like 'Charity' & 'Soft Caress')	

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<i>Myrica californica</i>	Pacific Wax Myrtle	Coastal native, nitrogen fixing, wildlife
<i>Nandina domestica</i>	Heavenly Bamboo	**
<i>Osmanthus heterophyllus</i>	Hollyleaf Osmanthus (great cultivars)	**Fragrant flowers fall/winter, many cultivars
<i>Osmerea burkwoodii</i>	Burkwood False Holly	Fragrant flowers
<i>Rhamnus californica</i>	CA Coffeeberry	Coastal native, great for wildlife
<i>Rhamnus tomentella</i>	Hoary Coffeeberry	Native to higher elevations, larger w/bluer foliage
<i>Ribes aureum</i>	Golden Currant	Native, nice fall color
<i>Ribes nevadense</i>	Sierra Flowering Currant	Native
<i>Ribes roezlii</i>	Sierra Gooseberry	Native, thorny, cutest mini-fuchsia like flowers
<i>Ribes sanguineum</i>	Red Flowering Currant	Native, super showy, hummers love
<i>Sarcococca</i> spp.	Sweetbox	**Fragrant flowers in winter. <i>S. hookeriana</i> v. <i>humilis</i> colonizes and will be more vigorous
<i>Sorbaria sorbifolia</i>	Ural False Spirea	Colonizer, great foliage
<i>Spirea betulifolia</i>	Birch Leaf Spirea	Clay tolerant, white flowers, colorful foliage spring/fall. 'Tor' and 'Glow Girl' are great cultivars
<i>Symphoricarpos alba</i>	Snow Berry	**Native, colonizer, good for wildlife
<i>Taxus x media</i>	Yew	**Evergreen, many cultivars/shapes/sizes
<i>Viburnum davidii</i>	<i>Viburnum davidii</i>	
TREES		
<i>Arbutus unedo</i>	Strawberry Tree	
<i>Acer circinatum</i> / <i>glabrum</i>	Vine/Rocky Mountain Maple	Native
VINES		
<i>Lonicera ciliosa</i>	Orange/Trumpet Honeysuckle	Native, great for wildlife
<i>Trachelospermum asiaticum</i>	Asiatic Jasmine	Ground cover vine