



Shadow lands

Shaded gardens are often under-appreciated, but they can have a lot to offer

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Tip 1: See the positives

Shaded gardens can have many benefits ... and provide plenty of opportunities. A shaded oasis near the house provides an easy transition between indoors and out, for example; and it shades the exterior of the house, reducing the need for air conditioning. It is possible to make the most of shaded gardens or shaded spots in a garden, turning them into outdoor living spaces, beautiful vistas or splashes of garden colour and visual intrigue.

Tip 2: Brighten things up

You can lighten the look of a shaded area with silver foliage plants or add colour with bright coloured or light green foliage. And there are many flowering plants well suited to shaded conditions. Some do well in part-shade, others will fare better in deeper shade (check the plant labels for advice) but as a general rule, the following plants will do well: iresine, clivia, fuchsia, crowea, hibiscus, purple tradescantia, begonia, azalea, camellia, bird's nest fern, rhaps palms, hydrangea and hellebore.

Tip 3: Add focal points

You can use bright or eye-catching focal points such as sculptures, statues or feature pots to draw the eye to a dark corner and create interest. The same applies under mature trees. Underneath established trees, root competition can make living conditions difficult for any other plants – one solution is to use potted

plants or epiphytes like bromeliads which need very little soil to survive.

Tip 4: Live a little

Living areas should ideally be located on the north side of the house, but this is not always possible. If a shaded space leaves your home uncomfortably cold, can lower tree branches be removed to let light in, or vines cleared off a wall or pergola, or can you change the colour of fences or walls to reflect more light and warmth? Mirrors, glass or other reflective surfaces can shine some light into dark corners, too.

Tip 5: Shed some light

Creative lighting of a dark garden space can be appealing and extend the use of the space long into the night. Uplights shining onto feature foliage plants or onto the underside of tree leaves create a magical and contemporary feel. Create atmosphere with fairy lights, tea light candles or Japanese lanterns which can be hung from trees or placed on tables or patios when entertaining outside.

Tip 6: Replace your lawn

Use shade-tolerant varieties of turf grasses, like Sir Walter Buffalo, Shademaster Buffalo, or Zoysia. You can replace lawn in hard-to-grow spots with a groundcover plant such as mondo grass, ajuga, heuchera, hosta, vinca, impatiens or English ivy. Another trick is to replace grass with garden beds in corners where lawn refuses to grow or if you want a no-maintenance option, you could consider artificial turf.



TOP LEFT Impatiens generally prefer a shady spot and deep, cool, moist soil but some do well in sun, too.
TOP In this shady spot, camellias are flourishing and a water feature draws the eye and adds interest.
ABOVE The new Encore Azalea range performs well in shady spots and offers increased drought-tolerance.
OPPOSITE PAGE TOP Most hellebores, including *Hellebore 'Tutu'* pictured here, will do well in part-shade locations.
OPPOSITE PAGE BOTTOM Fuschias tend to prefer dappled shade or semi-shaded locations. Shown here, *Fuchsia 'Violetta'* which flowers from winter to summer.

Slip sliding

Slippery paving, caused by algal growth, is a common problem in heavily shaded gardens. Pavers (and other objects) which remain moist for long enough can be taken over by a green slime. If your paths are covered in slippery moss or algae, try cleaning by applying a mix of vinegar and water. Let it sit for half an hour, peel off moss with a knife and then scrub with a coarse brush or broom. Hose off or use a pressure washer in areas where drainage and water restrictions aren't an issue.



Tip 7: Watch those weeds

In moist, shaded conditions, weeds like wandering jew, privet and fishbone fern can be a recurring problem. Excess moisture should be intercepted before it can feed the weeds, with proper drainage and rainwater tanks catching the water from your roof and paved areas. Poor growth results in the past may also be due to having an overgrown garden. Allow more sunlight to shine through by identifying and removing woody weeds, which can be the thickest and most vigorous plants to survive in the shade.

Tip 8: Prepare the soil

In a shaded space where nothing has grown for a long time, the soil may be depleted of nutrients. Before planting shade-tolerant plants, improve the soil by digging in compost, a wetting agent, and manure or other organic fertiliser. After planting, apply a layer of mulch. Once your plants are in, don't over water. Less evaporation occurs in shady spots so plants need less water, even in summer.

Tip 9: Maintain regularly

Thick leaves and debris build up under shade trees. Organic matter is great for plant health, but you can have too much of a good thing. Seeds can fail to germinate through a thick

layer of fallen leaves. Clean out the bulk of leaf litter and compost it for later use on the garden. Then plant some shade-loving plants and feed and water them to establish. ■

Prepared by Jacki Brown and the ecodesign team on behalf of the Australian Institute of Landscape Designers & Managers (AILDM): www.aildm.com.au

Shade lovers

- *Brunnera macrophylla* (perennial with pretty flowers and foliage)
- *Euphorbia robbiae* (broad green leaves, fragrant white bell flowers)
- *Fatsia japonica* (small shrub with creamy flowers in summer)
- *Hedera helix* (an adaptable ivy used as a climber or groundcover)
- *Helleborus orientalis* (perennial with purple to white flowers)
- *Hosta spp.* (variable foliage pattern, tall flower spikes in summer)
- *Hydrangea macrophylla* (flower colour varies with soil condition)
- *Viola cornuta* (perennial with masses of flowers in spring)

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