



Annuals for the Shade



Most annuals like sun, but annuals can play an important role in the summer garden whether you are planting in sunny areas or in the shade. Before we go over some of the best annuals for shade, we need to define shade. For our purposes, any time a plant will cast its own shadow for 6 or more hours a day, the location can be considered full sun. If the plant gets a little less sun, but the sun it does receive is during the afternoon, we would still consider it a sunny location. When a plant gets 4-6 hours of sun, consider the location light shade. 2-4 hours of sun can be called medium shade and less than 2 hours of sun qualifies as full or dense shade.

Unfortunately, even shade-tolerant annuals don't do very well in full shade. When trying to determine the level of shade in a given area, be sure to give the area extra credit if its shade is created by deciduous trees (since that is filtered, moving shade) or if the area receives lots of reflected light

off nearby light-colored buildings. Check the area a couple times a day and on several different days during the growing season. Sometimes an area we think is fairly shady actually gets enough light to grow the more demanding sun-lovers.

In addition to evaluating your shade level and putting the right plant in the right place, be sure to take into consideration other factors that might affect plant growth in that area. Quite often the shade is created by nearby trees or large shrubs that in addition to taking up their share of the sun, take up most of the available nutrients and water in the area. When this is the case, the gardener needs to be especially mindful in keeping the annuals watered and fertilized, especially when they are newly planted and struggling to send out their roots.

All of the plants we have listed below will grow in shade. However, to avoid disappointment, gardeners need to understand that when these plants are grown in too much shade some of them might not bloom as well or may have a looser, leggier growth habit.

For densely shaded areas colorful foliage plants are recommended to add color. These include coleus, alternanthera, acalyopa, golden-leaf duranta, vinca vines, ivies, licorice plants, and many others. Caladiums are an old stand by for the densely shaded area as long as they are kept moist. The larger leaf coleus are with their croton like leaves are ideal for moist shady areas.

Light Shade Only

The Bacopa Giant Snowflake, 'Sutera hybrids', a Proven Winners selection, is an instant hit with gardeners. Sutera hybrids are incredibly vigorous and versatile. It's "living carpet" growth is unbeatable for filling those inevitable bare spots and spicing up small pots. Giant Snowflake has jumbo white flowers and is extra vigorous. Keep the soil moist and well drained, flowers will drop if under watered.

Calibrochoa is a fantastic annual hybrid and is indispensable for use in containers and hanging baskets. Plants bloom nonstop until hard frost without need of deadheading. You can expect hummingbirds to visit your garden when you plant Calibrochoa because they love the large trumpet shaped flowers and it's good nectar source. The small bell-shaped flowers bloom all season long to fill garden beds and cascade from containers.

Lobelia Small delicate flowers; some varieties have intense blue color; performs best as cool season annual. This annual is available either as a trailing or upright plant. Lobelias do well in rich organic soil and in shady areas. There are cutting propagated varieties which tolerate more heat and have larger flowers.

Torenia (Clown or Wishbone Flower) Snapdragon-like pink, blue or white flowers on compact or trailing plants. The newer hybrids of the Catalina and summer Wave series which are propagated by cuttings are much more heat tolerant and longer blooming than the seed grown varieties.

Salvia (Scarlet Sage) Bold red, purple, orange or white spikes of color on upright plants. Salvia thrives in light shade. The more pastel colors and the white salvia retain their color a lot better in areas shaded from the hot afternoon sun

Nicotiana (Flowering Tobacco) Loose clusters of red, pink, white or pale green flowers held above large leaves. This plant too attracts butterflies and hummingbirds.

Cleome (Spider Flower) Very tall, willowy plants with large heads of spider-like blooms in pink, purple or white.

Ivy Geranium Trailing plants with ivy-like foliage; flower heads looser than regular geraniums; lots of colors. Ivy geraniums can withstand more shade than the upright zonal geraniums, but still need at least half a day of full sun for the best blooming production.

Snapdragons have intricate flowers on long, terminal racemes; wide color range; upright plants; cold-tolerant. Many of the dwarf varieties are ideal for containers in part shaded areas. Remove seed pods to stimulate bloom later in the summer.

Ageratum (Floss Flower) has tight clusters of fluffy flowers; lavender-blue, white and occasionally rose; compact bedding or upright cutting varieties available; needs occasional deadheading to stay productive. The white and rose varieties do best in light shade.

Nierembergia (Cupflower) Bell-shaped light blue or white flowers on a compact plant with fine foliage. Most garden experts feel that it is an under used plant in the garden. Newer hybrids are more heat tolerant and bloom longer.

Sweet Alyssum has rounded heads of tiny blooms; white, rose or purple; very fragrant; heavy feeder; cold-tolerant. Alyssum with its honey like fragrance is a nice plant for containers and it attracts butterflies. Thrives in poor sandy soil.

Thunbergia (Black-eyed Susan Vine) Showy yellow, orange or white flowers with dark centers; fast growing vine. This tropical annual is very much underused in the garden. Thunbergia blooms until frost and can withstand heat and drought once established. There are a whole new series of hybrid varieties with shades of red and salmon.

Mimulus (Monkey Flower) is another member of the snapdragon family; yellow flowers tinged with red or bronze; upright plants. Mimulus is a cool weather plant which will persist most of the summer in shady areas as long as it has moist soil. It cannot tolerate dry conditions.

Partial Shade

Balsam is an upright relative of impatiens with similar flowers but they are held close to the main stems; many colors. A favorite in grandma's garden, since it grows in any type of soil and re-seeds. The double flowering varieties are particularly attractive.

Begonia, Wax An interesting combination of stiff, waxy leaves that can be green or shades of bronze with flowers of either pink, white or red; compact, upright plants.

Begonia, Tuberous Very large individual flowers on upright or trailing plant with large fleshy leaves and stems; grown from a tuber; wide color range; very heavy feeder.

Browallia Upright plant that offers medium-sized blue or white flowers; likes warm weather.

Impatiens Queen of the Shade Plants! Wide range of flowers colors on a wide range of plant sizes; upright or spreading; regular impatiens tolerate more shade than New Guineas.

Coleus Prized for its colorful foliage; leaves various patterns of red, green, bronze, pink and maroon; new varieties tolerate both sun and shade; not grown for flower (flower spikes usually removed).

Elephant Ears Huge green leaves with a tropical look; grown from a large bulb; start early indoors.

Pansies & Violas Flowers in a wide range of colors; pansies have larger blooms than violas; both bloom best early in the season when it is still cool; their greater numbers make up for the smaller blooms on violas.

Dusty Miller Grown for its dusty-white foliage; rarely blooms; upright; several varieties with different types of leaves; used to highlight and complement other plants.