

Where Grass Won't Grow

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Why won't grass grow? -Common reasons

- Not enough sun
- Poor soil
- Not enough water
- Too much water
- Cutting the grass too short
- Compaction

Common tactics to help - but will they work?

- Limb up the tree
- Add soil
- Choosing shade-tolerant grasses
- Set your mower blades high and keep the grass relatively tall. The longer grass blades intercept more light for more photosynthesis.
- Do a better job raking leaves

Notes:

Very Common recommendations: Hosta and Hellebores | Ajuga and Liriope

The Rest:

Chasmanthium latifolium - Indian woodoats
Geranium macrorrhizum -Bigroot geranium
Tiarella spp. – Foamflower
Heuchera villosa - hairy alumroot
Pulmonaria – Lungwort
Begonia grandis – Hardy Begonia
Phlox divaricata –Wild blue Phlox
Uvularia spp. - Uvularia
Epimedium spp. – Barrenwort
Epimedium × *versicolor* 'Sulphureum'
Epimedium × *youngianum* 'Roseum'
Carex pensylvanica - Pennsylvania sedge
Lycoris squamigera – Nakedlady
Lycoris radiata - Spiderlily
Galanthus spp. -Snowdrop
Danae racemosa –Poet's Laurel

5 A's

- *Amorphophallus konjac* – Voodoo lily
- *Arisaema* spp. – Jack-in-the-pulpit
- *Aspidistra* – Castiron Plant
- *Asarum* spp. – Wild Ginger
- *Arum italicum* – Italian Arum

Dark Places

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In the 1962 expanded and revised addition of Harriet K. Morse's 1939 classic gardening book 'Gardening in the Shade' she opens: "*The shaded garden has character. It is cool and inviting on a warm day in midsummer. The gardener at work is grateful for shelter from the burning sun, while the stroller rejoices that flowers will prosper in all the tones and undertones of shade. The checkered patterns of sunlight and shadow play upon flowering shrub and herbaceous border, on path and pool and woodland walk.*"

Those of us who live with shade in our gardens know that in many ways it's a mixed blessing. Shade allows you to grow plants that would fry in a full sun garden. However, it can also be limiting if you want to grow plants that command full sun to thrive. If your garden is laden with shadows, embrace your space; many of the most beautiful gardens in the world are full of shade. Keep reading to find out how you can take control of your dark places.

Thoughtful Shadows:

The first step is truly understanding shade. No two shady gardens are alike. Some gardeners deal with near darkness and some have dappled light. Many gardeners have patches of shade mixed with patches of blazing hot sun. A spot that is shady in the morning, may be unwelcoming in the afternoon. Step one is to pay attention to your unique situation and find plants that thrive in those conditions. I define full sun as six or more continuous hours of direct sunlight. Defining shade is a little trickier. There is a huge difference between morning sun and afternoon sun. Often when a plant is recommended for partial shade, morning sun and afternoon shade are best. In fact, during the hot summers of the Mid-South morning sun and afternoon shade are the most coveted spots in the garden.

You additionally need to determine if the shade in your garden leans more toward dry shade or more toward moist shade. This goes a long way when trying to be successful with shade. Unfortunately, dry shade (which is very common in the Mid-South) is one of the trickiest spots to navigate in the garden. Many gardeners with large trees deal with this situation. Pay attention to how consistently moist your soil stays throughout the year to help determine planting needs.

Texture Plus Color:

One of the top success strategies for a shade garden is to pick plants with different textures. Big bold leaves mixed with finer textures takes you one step closer to shade gardening success. Step two is bringing color into the shade garden. When we think color in the garden, our mind often goes straight to colorful full sun annuals. However, we need to remind ourselves that foliage color can vary vastly. Look for shade loving plants with different hues of green, blue and mint tones or even bright gold plants to help you bring color into the shade. White is also a must for a shade garden, shade plants that bloom white or those with variegated foliage bring light into the darkest of garden locations.

Garden Details:

For the most part, gardeners have very little luck growing traditional turfgrass species in deep shade. Abandoning dreams of lush lawns under dense canopies and atop the surface roots of trees is advised. This creates an opportunity to expand gardening beds and create beautiful winding paths. A garden path on the surface is a means to an end. However, creating a path that holds your interest as you travel through the shade garden is important. It is an advisable strategy to create a rather wide garden lane that traverses the garden and acts as a promenade. This lane can wind or be straight depending on your taste but should culminate in a vista or main garden focal point. From this garden lane create meandering paths that lead visitors to other areas of the garden. Adding additional elements like benches or whimsical touches along your garden paths can enhance the beauty of your garden.